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THE

Christian in Complete Armour:

OR, A

TREATISE

OF THE

SAINTS' WAR AGAINST THE DEVIL.

WHEREIN

A DISCOVERY IS MADE OF THAT GRAND ENEMY OF GOD AND HIS PEOPLE, IN HIS POLICIES, POWER, SEAT OF HIS EMPIRE, WICKEDNESS, AND CHIEF DESIGN HE HATH AGAINST THE SAINTS.

A MAGAZINE OPENED,

From whence the Christian is furnished with Spiritual Arms for the Battle, helped on with his Armour, and taught the Use of his Weapons; together with the happy Issue of the whole War.

By WILLIAM GURNALL, M.A.

Formerly Pastor of the Church of Christ at Lavenham, in Suffolk.

THE EIGHTH EDITION, CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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DEDICATION TO PART FIRST.

TO MY DEARLY BELOVED FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS,

THE INHABITANTS OF LAVENHAM.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,

SOLOMON saith, *The desire of a man is his kindness, and a poor man is better than a liar*, Prov. xix. 22. If you be of his mind, I dare promise these Notes (which I here devote to your service) a kind acceptance at your hands. You will find me to be the *poor man*, by the mite I present you with; but the hearty desire of your eternal happiness, from which it comes, will, I hope, clear me from being *the liar*. I never could be so serviceable to you, as many ministers are to their people, having been with you in much weakness; and still it is the good pleasure of God, I should be staked down to a short tether of strength and abilities; I have reason therefore (that I may, though not recompense that want, yet express my deep sense thereof) to crowd the more love into the little I can do for you. And truly my heart is enlarged to you, and to God for you. If any thing makes me loth to be gone into another world, (which my dropping house bids me above many prepare for), it is not the least, to think I shall leave no more of you walking in the way to eternal life, and you who are on your way thither, in no closer gospel-order for your mutual help and com-

fort in your journey; yea, while I am among you, little do you think how much of your poor minister's life lies at your mercy. If I should measure my life by the joy of it, (as indeed who doth not?) then in some uprightness I can say, with Paul, I live as I see any of you stand fast in the Lord, and die as I see others stand fast in their sins, not to be moved with all the entreaties of the Gospel which have wooed you. And why, my dear friends, should not the life of your souls be more precious in your own sight than mine? But I forbear: I would not willingly be thought, as some husbands are, to be kinder to you abroad before strangers, than I am at home.

What I present you with in this Treatise, is a dish from your own table, and so, I hope, will go down the better. You cannot despise it (though the fare be mean), except you will blame yourselves, who chose the cook. I cannot be earnest with others, to bestow so much time as to read over these plain sermons, lest it should be to their loss; it were but to call them from gathering sheaves in the more fruitful labours of others, to glean a few ears, and those but thin also, in mine; yet with you, my people, I may be a little bold. Physicians say, the mother's milk, though not so weighty as another's, if no noxious humour be tasted in it, because natural, is more proper for the child than a stranger's. And, I think, it would not be an error, if I should say it held in the milk which the minister gives to his flock. A people conscientiously lying at the breasts of their own minister (if the milk he gives be wholesome), may expect the blessing of God for their nourishment, though it has not so much lusciousness to please the curious taste as some others. Well, whatever these sermons were, some of those few

spirits

spirits which you found in hearing, will be missing in the reading of them. It is as easy to paint fire with the heat, as with pen and ink to commit that to paper, which occurs in preaching. There is as much difference between a sermon in the pulpit, and printed in a book, as between milk in the warm breast, and in a sucking bottle; yet what it loseth in the lively taste, is recompensed by the convenience of it. The book may be at hand when the preacher cannot; and truly, that is the chief end of printing, that as the bottle and spoon is used when the mother is sick or out of the way, so the book, to quiet the Christian and stay his stomach in the absence of the Ordinance. He that readeth sermons and good books at home, to save his pains of going to hear, is a thief to his soul in a religious habit: he consults for his ease, but not for his profit; he eats cold meat when he may have hot; he hazards the losing the benefit of both by contemning of one. If the spouse could have had her beloved at home; she needed not to have coursed the streets and waited on the public. O what need we offer sacrilege for sacrifice, rob God of one duty to pay him another! He hath laid our work in better order; one wheel would not interfere with another, if we did more regularly. A chief part of David's arithmetic of numbering our days, lies in that which we call division, as to cast the account of this our short life so as to divide the little whole sum into the several portions of time due for the performing of every duty in. An instrument is not in tune, except it have all the strings; and those will not make good music, if the musician hath not wisdom to cause every string to speak in its due time; the Christian is not in tune, except he takes in all the duties of his place and calling; neither

will the performance of them be harmonious in God's ear, if every one be not done in its proper season. O my friends, labour not only to do the duty of your place, but that duty in its own place also. Hear when you should hear. Know your time for closet, and time for shop; and when your retiring hour comes, a few minutes now and then spent in taking a repetition of what formerly you heard, shall not (I hope) another day be reckoned with your lost time. The subject of the Treatise is solemn—A war between the Saint and Satan, and that so bloody a one, that the cruellest which ever was fought by men, will be found but sport and child's play to this. Alas, what is the killing of bodies to destroying of souls? 'Tis a sad meditation indeed, to think how many thousands have been sent to the grave in a few late years among us by the sword of man; but far more astonishing to consider how many of those may be sent to hell by the sword of God's wrath. 'Tis a spiritual war you shall read of, and that not a history of what was fought many ages past, and is now over; but of what now is doing, the tragedy is at present acting, and that not at the further end of the world, but what concerns thee and every one that reads it. The stage whereon this war is fought, is every man's own soul. Here is no neuter in this war, the whole world is engaged in the quarrel, either for God against Satan, or for Satan against God. It was a great question some years past, Who are you for? The not giving a good answer to which, hath cost many a life. O my dear friends, think solemnly what answer you mean to give God and conscience, when they in a dying hour shall ask every one of you, Who art thou for? 'Tis an incomparable mercy, that you are yet where you may choose your side; it will not

be

be ever so, may be not a day to an end. If once in another world, you must then stand to your colours, yet you may run from the devil's quarters, and be taken into Christ's pay. The drum beats in the Gospel for volunteers. O, the Lord make you willing in the day of his power. I know you all would be on the surest side. O what can you be sure of, while under the devil's ensign, but damnation? The curse of God cleaves to him and all that take part with him. O let not the little plunder and spoil of sinful pleasures and pelf, bewitch you still to follow his camp. What is that soldier better for the booty he gets in a fight, who before he can off with it, is himself slain upon the place? (so many have been served in these wars, if report be true). 'Tis that thou must certainly look for. The piece is charged, and aim taken at thy breast, which will be thy eternal death, if thou persistest. God's threatenings will go off at last, and then where art thou? where, but in hell, where thy wedge of gold and Babylonish garment, thy wages of unrighteousness, will do thee little stead? O neighbours, I am loth to leave you in the way where God's bullets fly; but I must have a word with you, my Christian friends, who have espoused Christ's quarrel, and are in the field against Satan. My heart is towards you, who have thus willingly offered yourselves among the Lord's people to his help against the mighty. He can destroy him without you, but he takes your love as kindly as if he could not. God hath sent me (as Jesse did David) with this little present to you and the rest of my brethren that are in his camp. May it be but to the strengthening of your hearts and hands in fighting the Lord's battles, and I shall bless God that put it into my heart thus to visit

you.

you. O hold on, dear friends, in your Christian warfare, let none take the crown from you. Whet your courage at the throne of grace, from whence all your recruits of soul-strength come. Send faith oft up the hill of the promise, to see and bring you the certain news of Christ's coming to you, yea, for you, and assured victory with him. Read the exploits which Christ's worthies by faith have done, and in their conquests read your own, for in them he spake with us, as the prophet of Jacob. Be thankful for every victory you get, and let not the howling wilderness, yet before you, put the song of your praises for temptations past out of tune; yet rejoice with trembling, as those who are still in your enemies' country, and must keep by the sword what you get by the sword: be sure you stand in close order among yourselves.—These times give us too many sad examples of such, who first fell from communion with their brethren, and then into the devourer's hand; stragglers are soon snapped; you will find you are safest in a body. *Take heed of a private spirit;* let not only your particular safety, but that of the whole army of saints, be in your eye and care, especially that company in which you match (congregation I mean); that soldier which can see an enemy in fight with his brethren, and not help them, he makes it but the more easy for the enemy to slay himself at last; say not therefore, *Am I my brother's keeper?* God would not keep him that cared not to keep his brother. Watch over one another, not to play the critic on your brother's failings, and triumph when he halts, but to help him up if he falls; or, if possible, to keep him from falling by a timely rescue, as Abishai came to David's succour. *Keep your rank and file.* We see what advantage

Satan

Satan hath got in these loose times, since we have learned to fight him out of order, and the private soldier (Christian, I mean) hath taken the officer's work out of his hands. *Harden yourselves against the scandals, which the cowardice and treachery of false brethren hath given you.* He is the right soldier that is not discouraged by those that run from, or that are slain in the battle; but still presseth on to victory, though he goes to it over the backs of others that are killed upon the place. In a word, *disentangle your hearts what you can from the love of, and distracting cares for this present world. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier,* 2 Tim. ii. 4. If it behoves any to have their will ready made, and their worldly interests set at home-stay, then surely the soldier: if any soldier, then the Christian. Get but once your hearts mortified to the world, and care rolled upon God, for name, estate, and relations here, and then you are fit to march wherever Christ will lead you. The want of this hath made many run home to save their own private stake there, when they should have been in the field for Christ. And now, my Christian friends, march on, not in the confidence of your armour, but in the power of his might, who hath promised shortly to subdue Satan under your feet. I have done; only I must crave pardon of you, for rending part of the Treatise from the other, which neither my little strength or leisure would suffer me to grasp at once.

But this having first put forth its hand in preaching, can make no great breach upon that, though it get the start a little in printing. Let me therefore, dear friends, (if God shall make this imperfect birth any way

way serviceable to your faith), humbly desire, that you would as continue to strive at the throne of grace for a blessing on my poor ministry among you, so also lift up a prayer, that strength may be given to bring forth what of this is yet undelivered. I do not send you thither where I intend not to meet you, but shall desire grace to be found faithful in striving with you, and for you, that amongst those who find any spiritual advantage from my weak labours, you to whom they are chiefly devoted may not receive the least. So prayeth

Your affectionate,

though unworthy Minister,

WILLIAM GURNALL.

Lavenham, Jan. 1, 1655.

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A

TREATISE

OF THE

WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

INTRODUCTION.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Ephes. VI. 10.

PAUL was now in bonds, yet not so close kept as to be denied pen and paper; God (it seems) gave him some favour in the sight of his enemies: Paul was Nero's prisoner, but Nero was much more God's. And while God had work for Paul, he found him friends both in Court and prison.

Let persecutors send the Saints to prison, God can provide a keeper for their turn.

But how doth this great Apostle spend his time in prison? Not in publishing invectives against those (though the worst of men) who had laid him in; a piece of zeal which the holy sufferers of those times were little acquainted with: Nor in politic councils, how he might wind himself out of his trouble, by sordid flattery of, or sinful compliance with, the great ones of the times: Some would have used any pick-lock to have opened a passage to their liberty, and not scrupled (so escape they might) whether they got out at the door or window: But this holy man was not so fond of liberty or life, as to purchase them at the least hazard to the gospel. He knew too much of another world, to bid so high for the enjoying of this; and therefore he is at a point what his enemies can do with him, well knowing he could go to Heaven whether they would or no: No, the great care which lay upon him, was for the churches of Christ; as a faithful steward he labours to set this House of God in order before his departure.—We read of no dispatches sent to court to procure his liberty; but many to the churches to help them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made them free. There is no such way to be even with the devil and his instruments, for all their spight against us, as by doing what good we can wherever we come.—The devil had as good have let Paul alone, for he no sooner comes into prison but he falls a preaching, at which the gates of satan's prison fly open, and poor sinners come forth. Happy for Onesimus that Paul was sent to gaol! God had an errand for Paul to

do to him and others, which the devil never dreamed of. Nay, he doth not only preach in prison, but, that he may do the devil all the mischief he can, he sends his epistles to the churches, that, tasting his spirit in his afflictions, and reading of his faith, now ready to be offered up, they might much more be confirmed; amongst which Ephesus was not least in his thoughts, as you may perceive by his abode with them two years together, Acts xix. 10.; as also by his sending for the elders of this Church as far as Miletus, in his last journey to Jerusalem, Acts xx. 17. to take his farewel of them, as never to see their face in this world more. And surely the sad impression which that heart-breaking departure left upon the spirits of these elders, yea, the whole church (by them acquainted with this mournful news), might stir up Paul, now in prison, to write unto this church, that having so much of his spirit, yea, of the spirit of the gospel left in their hands, to converse with, they might more patiently take the news of his death.

In the former part of this epistle he soars high in the mysteries of faith. In the latter, according to his usual method, he descends to application; where we find him contracting all those truths, as beams, together, in a powerful exhortation, the more to enkindle their hearts, and powerfully persuade them to *walk worthy of their vocation*, chap. iv. 1.; which then is done, when the Christian's life is so transparent, that the grace of the gospel shines forth in the power of holiness on every side, and from all his relations, as a candle in a chrystal glass, not in a dark lanthorn, lightsome one way and dark another; and therefore he runs over the several relations of *husband*, *wife*, *parents*, *children*, *master*, and *servants*, and presseth the same in all these.

Now having set every one in his proper place, about his particular duty, (as a wise general after he hath ranged his army, and drawn them forth into rank and file,) he makes this following speech at the head of this Ephesian camp, all in martial phrase, as best suiting the Christian's calling, which is a continued warfare with the world, and the Prince of the world. The speech itself contains two parts:

First, A short, but sweet and powerful encouragement, v. 10.

Secondly, The other part is spent in several directions, for their managing this war the more successfully, with some motives here and there sprinkled among them. To begin with the first:

First, The word of encouragement to battle. With this he begins his speech: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord;* the best way indeed to prepare them for the following directions. A soul deeply possessed with fear, and dispirited with strong impressions of danger, is in no posture for counsel. As we see in an army when put to flight by sudden alarm, or apprehension of danger,

danger, it is hard rallying them into order till the fright occasioned thereby is over; therefore the Apostle first raiseth up their spirits, *Be strong in the Lord:* As if he should say, perhaps some drooping souls find their hearts fail them, while they see their enemies so strong, and they so weak; so numerous, and they so few; so well appointed, and they so naked and unarmed; so skilful and expert at arms, but they green and raw soldiers: Let not these, or any other thoughts dismay you, but with undaunted courage march on, *and be strong in the Lord;* on whose performance lies the stress of the batle, and not on your skill or strength: It is not the least of a minister's care and skill in dividing the word, so to press the Christian's duty, as not to oppress his spirit with the weight of it, by laying it on the creature's own shoulders, and not on the Lord's strength, as here our Apostle teacheth us.

In this verse, First, here is a familiar compellation; *My brethren.*

Secondly, here is the exhortation; *Be strong.*

Thirdly, Here is a cautionary direction annexed to the exhortation; *In the Lord.*

Fourthly, Here is an encouraging amplification of the direction; *And in the power of his might*, or in his mighty power.

CHAP. I.

Of Christian courage and resolution; wherefore necessary, and how obtained.

WE shall wave the compellation, and begin with the exhortation, *Be strong*, that is, be of good courage, so commonly used in scripture phrase, 2 Chron. xxxii. 7. *Be strong and courageous.* So Isa. xxxv. 4. *Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong.* Or, unite all the powers of your souls, and muster up your whole force, for you will have use for all you can make or get. From whence the point is this.

Doct. The Christian, of all men, needs courage and resolution. Indeed there is nothing he doth as a Christian, or can do, but is an act of valour; a cowardly spirit is beneath the lowest duty of a Christian, Josh. i. 7. *Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest;* what, stand in battle against those warlike nations? No, *but that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee.* It requires more prowess and greatness of spirit to obey God faithfully, than to command an army of men; to be a Christian than to be a captain. What seems less than for a Christian to pray?

yet this cannot be performed aright without a princely spirit: as Jacob is said to behave himself like a prince, when he did but pray; for which he came out of the field God's bannerite. Indeed if you call that prayer, which a carnal person performs; nothing is more poor and dastard-like. Such a one is as great a stranger to this enterprise, as the Craven soldier is to the exploits of a valiant chieftain. The Christian in prayer comes up close to God, with an humble boldness of faith, and takes hold of him, wrestles with him; yea, will not let him go without a blessing, and all this in the face of his own sins, and divine justice, which let fly upon him from the fiery mouth of the law: while the other's boldness in prayer is but the child either of ignorance in his mind, or hardness in his heart; whereby not feeling his sins, and not knowing his danger, he rushes upon duty with a blind confidence, which soon quells when conscience awakes, and gives him the alarm that his sins are upon him, as the Philistines on Samson: alas, then, in a fright the poor-spirited wretch throws down his weapon, flies the presence of God with guilty Adam, and dares not look him in the face. Indeed there is no duty in a Christian's whole course of walking with God, or acting for God, but is lined with many difficulties, which shoot, like enemies through the hedges, at the Christian, whilst he is marching towards Heaven; so that he is put to dispute every inch of ground as he goes. They are only a few noble spirited souls (who dare take heaven by force) that are fit for this calling. For the further proof of this point, see some few pieces of service that every Christian engageth in.

First, The Christian is to proclaim and prosecute an irreconcileable war against his bosom sins; those sins which have lain nearest his heart, must now be trampled under his feet. So David, *I have kept myself from mine iniquity.* Now what courage and resolution doth this require? You think Abraham was tried to purpose, when called to take his *son*, *his son* Isaac, *his only son whom he loved,* Gen. xxii. 2. and offer him up with his own hands, and no other; yet what was that to this? soul, take thy lust, thy only lust, which is the child of thy dearest love, thy Isaac, the sin which has caused most joy and laughter, from which thou hast promised thyself the greatest return of pleasure or profit; as ever thou lookest to see my face with comfort, lay hands on it, and offer it up: pour out the blood of it before me; run the sacrificing knife of mortification into the very heart of it; and this freely, joyfully, (for it is no pleasing sacrifice that is offered with a countenance cast down), and all this now, before thou hast one embrace more from it. Truly this is a hard chapter: flesh and blood cannot bear this saying; our lust will not lie so patiently on the altar, as Isaac, or as a *Lamb that is brought*

brought to the slaughter, which is dumb, but will roar and shriek; yea, even shake and rend the heart with their hideous outcries. Who is able to express the conflicts, the wrestlings, the convulsions of spirit the Christian feels, before he can bring his heart to this work! Or who can fully set forth the art, the rhetorical insinuations, which such a lust will plead with for itself? One while satan will extenuate and mince the matter: It is but a little one, O spare it, and thy soul shall live for all that. Another while he flatters the soul with the secrecy of it; Thou mayest keep me and thy credit also: I will not be seen abroad in thy company, to shame thee among thy neighbours; shut me up in the most retired room thou hast in thy heart, from the hearing of others, if thou wilt only let me now and then have the wanton embraces of thy thoughts and affections in secret. If that cannot be granted, then satan will seem only to desire execution may be stayed a-while, as Jephtha's daughter of her father; *Let me alone a month or two, and then do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth*, Judg. xi. 2, 37. well knowing few such reprieved lusts but at last obtain their full pardon, yea, recover their favour with the soul. Now what resolution doth it require to break through such violence and importunity, and notwithstanding all this to do present execution? Here the valiant swordsmen of the world have shewed themselves mere cowards, who have come out of the field with victorious banners, and then lived, yea, died slaves to a bare lust at home. As one could say of a great Roman champion, who, as he rode in his triumphant chariot through Rome, had his eye never off a courtezan that walked along the street: Behold, how this goodly captain, that conquered such potent armies, is himself conquered by one silly woman!

Secondly, The Christian is to walk singularly, not after the world's guise, Rom. xii. 2. We are commanded not to be conformed to this world; that is, not to accommodate ourselves to the corrupt customs of the world. The Christian must not be of such a complying nature, to cut the coat of his profession according to the fashion of the times, or the humour of the company he falls into; like that courtier, who being asked how he could keep his preferment in such changing times, which one while had a prince for popery, another while against popery, answered, He was *E Salice, non ex Quercu ortus:* He was not a stubborn oak, but bending osier, that could yield to the wind: No, the Christian must stand fixed to his principles, and not change his habit; but freely show what countryman he is, by his holy constancy in the truth. Now, what an odium, what snares, what dangers doth this singularity expose the Christian to? Some will hoot and mock him, as one in a Spanish fashion would be laugh-

ed at in our streets. Thus Michael flouted David. Indeed the world counts the Christian, for his singularity of life, the only fool; which I have thought gave the first occasion to that nick-name whereby men commonly express a silly man or a fool: Such a one (say they) is a mere Abraham; that is, in the world's account, a fool. But why an Abraham? Because Abraham did that which carnal reason (the world's idol) laughs at as mere folly; he left a present estate in his father's house, to go he knew not whither, to receive an inheritance he knew not when. And truly such fools all the saints are branded for, by the wise world. *You know the man and his communication*, said Jehu to his companions, asking what that mad fellow came for, who was no other than a prophet, 2 Kings ix. 11. Now this requires courage to despise the shame, which the Christian must expect to meet withal for his singularity. Shame is that which proud nature most disdains: to avoid which, many durst not *confess Christ openly*, John vii. 13. Many lose heaven, because they are ashamed to go in a fool's coat thither. Again, as some will mock, so others will persecute to death, merely for this non-conformity in the Christian's principles and practices to them. This was the trap laid for the three children; they must dance after Nebuchadnezzar's pipe, or burn. This was the plot laid to ensnare Daniel, who walked so unblameably, that his very enemies gave him this testimony, that he had no fault, but his singularity in his religion, Dan. vi. 5. 'Tis a great honour to a Christian, yea, to religion itself, when all their enemies can say is, They are precise, and will not do as we do. Now in such a case as this, when the Christian must turn or burn; leave praying, or become a prey to the cruel teeth of bloody men; how many politic retreats, and self-preserving distinctions would a cowardly unresolved heart invent! The Christian, that hath so great opposition, had need be well locked into the saddle of his profession, or else he will be soon dismounted.

Thirdly, The Christian must keep on his way to heaven in the midst of all the scandals that are cast upon the ways of God, by the apostacy and foul falls of false professors. There were always such in the church, who, by their sad miscarriages in judgment and practice, have laid a stone of offence in the way of profession, at which weak Christians are ready to make a stand (as they at the bloody body of Asahel, 2 Sam. ii. 22.) not knowing whether they may venture any further in their profession, seeing such (whose gifts they so much admired) lie before them, wallowing in the blood of their slain profession; of zealous professors, to prove, perhaps, fiery persecutors; of strict performers of religious duties, irreligious atheists; no more like the men they were some years past, than the vale of Sodom, (now a bog and quag-

mire)

mire) is, to what it was, when for fruitfulness compared to the garden of the Lord. We had need have a holy resolution to bear up against such discouragements, and not to faint ; as Joshua who lived to see the whole camp of Israel (a very few excepted) revolting, and in their hearts turning back to Egypt, and yet with an undaunted spirit maintained his integrity ; yea, resolved, though not a man beside would bear him company, yet he would serve the Lord.

Fourthly, The Christian must trust in a withdrawing God, Isa. i. 10. *Let him that walks in darkness, and sees no light, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.* This requires a holy boldness of faith indeed to venture into God's presence, as Esther into Ahasuerus's, when no smile is to be seen on his face, no golden sceptre of the promise perceived by the soul, as held forth to embolden it to come near, then to press it with this noble resolution : *If I perish, I perish :* nay more, to trust not only in a withdrawing, but a *killing God*, Job. xiii. 15. Not when his love is hid, but when his wrath breaks forth : now for a soul to make his approaches to God by a recumbency of faith, while God seems to fire upon it, and shoot his frowns like envenomed arrows into it : this is hard work, and will try the Christian's metal to purpose. Yet such a masculine spirit we find in that poor woman of Canaan, who takes up the bullets Christ shot at her, and with an humble boldness of faith sends them back again in her prayer.

Fifthly, The believer is to persevere in his Christian course to the end of his life ; his work and his life must go off the stage together. This adds weight to every other difficulty of the Christian's calling : We have known many who have gone into the field, and liked the work of a soldier for a battle or two, but soon have had enough, and came running home again ; but few can bear it as a constant trade. Many are soon engaged in holy duties, easily persuaded to take up a profession of religion, and as easily persuaded to lay it down ; like the new moon, which shines a little in the first part of the night, but is down before half the night be gone ; lightsome professors in their youth, whose old age is wrapt up in thick darkness of sin and wickedness : O this persevering is a hard word ! this taking up the cross daily, this praying always, this watching night and day, and never laying aside our clothes and armour ; I mean, indulging ourselves to remit and unbend in our holy waiting on God, and walking with God, this sends many sorrowful away from Christ ; yet this is the saint's duty, to make religion his every-day-work, without any vacation from one end of the year to the other. These few instances are enough to shew what need the Christian hath of resolution. The application follows.

Use 1. This gives us then a reason why there are so many professors, and so few Christians indeed ; so many that run, and so few obtain ; so many go into the field against satan, and so few come out conquerors ; because all have a desire to be happy, but few have courage and resolution to grapple with the difficulties that meet them in their way to happiness. All Israel came joyfully out of Egypt under Moses's conduct ; yea, and a mixed multitude with them ; but when their bellies were a little pinched with hunger, and their greedy desires of a present Canaan deferred ; yea, instead of peace and plenty, war and penury ; they (like white-livered soldiers) are ready to fly from their colours, and make a dishonourable retreat into Egypt. Thus the greatest part of those who profess the gospel, when they come to push of pike, to be tried what they will do, and endure, for Christ, grow sick of their enterprize: Alas ! their hearts fail them, they are like the waters of Bethlehem ; but if they must dispute their passage with so many enemies, they will even content themselves with their own cistern, and leave heaven to others that will venture more for it. O how many part with Christ at this cross-way ! like Oraph ; that go a furlong or two with Christ, until he goes to take them off from their worldly hopes, and bids them prepare for hardship, and then they fairly kiss and leave him ! loth, indeed to lose heaven, but more loth to buy it at so dear a rate.— Like some green heads, that childishly make choice of some sweet trade (such as is the confectioners), from a liquorish tooth they have to the junkets it affords ; but meeting with sour sauce of labour and toil that goes with them, they give in, and are weary of their service ; the sweet bait of religion hath drawn many to nibble at it, who are offended with the hard service it calls to ; it requires another spirit than the world can give or receive, to follow Christ fully.

Use 2. Let this then exhort you, Christians, to labour for this holy resolution and prowess, which is so needful for your Christian profession, that without it you cannot be what you profess. The fearful are in the forlorn of those that march for hell, Rev. xxi. The violent and valiant are they, which take heaven by force: Cowards never won heaven. Say not, thou hast royal blood running in thy veins, and art begotten of God, except thou canst prove thy pedigree by this heroic spirit, to dare to be holy in spite of men and devils. The eagle tries her young ones by the sun ; Christ tries his children by their courage, that dare look on the face of death and danger for his sake, Mark viii. 34, 35. O how uncomely a sight is it, a bold sinner, and a fearful saint ! one resolved to be wicked, and a Christian wavering in his holy course ! to see guilt put innocency to flight, and hell keep the field, impudently braving it with displayed banners of open profaneness,

faineness, and saints to hide their colours for shame, or run from them for fear, who should rather wrap themselves in them, and die upon the place, than thus betray the glorious name of God, which is called upon by them to the scorn of the uncircumcised! Take heart therefore, O ye saints, and be strong, your cause is good, God himself espouseth your quarrel, who hath appointed you his own Son general of the field, called *the captain of our salvation*, Heb. ii. He shall lead you on with courage, and bring you off with honour. He lived and died for you, he will live and die with you; for mercy and tenderness to his soldiers, none like him. Trajan, 'tis said, rent his clothes to bind up his soldiers wounds; Christ poured out his blood as balm to heal his saints wounds, tears off his flesh to bind them up. For prowess, none to compare with him; he never turned his head from danger; no, not when hell's malice and heaven's justice appeared in field against him: *Knowing all that should come upon him, went forth and said, Whom seek ye?* John xviii. 4. For success, insuperable; he never lost battle; even when he lost his life, he won the field, carrying the spoils thereof in the triumphant chariot of his ascension to heaven with him, where he makes an open shew of them to the unspeakable joy of saints and angels. You march in the midst of gallant spirits, your fellow-soldiers, every one the son of a prince: behold some (enduring with you here below a great sight of afflictions and temptations) take heaven by storm and force: Others you may see, after many assaults, repulses, and rallyings of their faith and patience, got upon the walls of heaven, conquerors; from whence they do, as it were, look down, and call you their fellow-brethren on earth, to march up the hill after them, crying aloud, Fall on, and the city is your own, as now it is ours; who, for a few days conflict, are now crowned with heaven's glory; one moment's enjoyment of which hath dried up all our tears, healed all our wounds, and made us forget the sharpness of the fight, with the joy of our present victory. In a word, Christians, God and angels are spectators, observing how you quit yourselves like children of the Most High: Every exploit your faith doth against sin and satan causeth a shout in heaven, while you valiantly prostrate this temptation, scale that difficulty, regain the other ground you even now lost, out of your enemies hands. Your dear Saviour, (who stands by with a reserve for your relief at a pinch) his very heart leaps within him for joy, to see the proof of your love to him, and zeal for him in all your combats, and will not forget all the faithful service you have done in his wars on earth; but when thou comest out of the field, will receive thee with the like joy, as he was entertained himself at his return to heaven, of his Father. Now, Christian, if thou meanest thus courageously to bear up against all opposition, in thy march

march to heaven; as thou shouldest do well, to raise thy spirit with such generous and soul-ennobling thoughts, so in an special manner look thy principles be well fixed, or else thy heart will be unstable, and an unstable heart is weak as water, it cannot excel in courage. Two things are required to fix our principles.

First, An established judgment in the truth of God. He that knows not well what, or whom he fights for, may soon be persuaded to change his side, or at least stand neuter. Such may be found, that go for professors, yet can hardly give an account what they hope for, or whom they hope in; yet Christians they must be thought, tho' they run before they know their errand; or if they have some principles which they go upon, they are so unsettled, that every wind blows them down, like loose tiles from the house-top. Blind zeal is soon put to a shameful retreat, while holy resolution, built on fast principles, lifts up its head, like a rock in the midst of the waves. *Those that know their God shall be strong and do exploits*, Dan. xi. 32. The angel told Daniel who were the men that would stand to their tackling, and bear up for God in that hour, both of temptation and persecution, which should be brought upon them by Antiochus: not all the Jews; some of them should be corrupt basely by flatteries, others scared by threats out of their profession, only a few of fixed principles, who knew their God whom they served, and were grounded in their religion, these should be strong, and do exploits; that is, to flatteries they should be incorruptible, and to power and force unconquerable.

Secondly, A sincere aim at the right end in our profession.—Let a man be never so knowing in the things of Christ, if his aim be not right in his profession, that man's principles will hang very loose, he will not venture much, or far, for Christ, no more, no further than he can save his own stake. A hypocrite may shew some mettle at hand, some courage for a spurt, in conquering some difficulties; but he will shew himself a jade at length. He who hath a false end in his profession, will soon come to an end of his profession, when he is pinched on that toe where his corn is: I mean, called to deny what his naughty heart aimed at all the while, now his heart fails him, he can go no farther. O take heed of this squint eye to our profit, pleasure, honour, or any thing beneath Christ and heaven! for they will take away your heart, as the prophet saith of wine and women: that is, our love; and if our love be taken away, there will be little courage left for Christ.—How courageous was Jehu at first? And he tells the world, it is zeal for God. But why doth his heart fail him then, before half his work be done? His heart was never right set: that very thing that stirred up his zeal at first, at last quenched and cowed it, and this was his ambition; his desire of a kingdom made him zealous

ous against Ahab's house, to cut them off (who might in time justle him beside the throne); which done, and he quietly settled, he dare not go thorough-stitch with God's work, lest he should lose what he had got, by provoking the people with a thorough reformation. Like some soldiers, when once they meet with a rich booty at the sacking of some town, are spoiled for fighting ever after.

CHAP. II.

Of the Saints Strength; where it lies, and wherefore laid up in God.

THE second branch of the words followeth, which contains a cautionary direction. Having exhorted the saints at Ephesus, and in them all believers, to a holy resolution and courage in their warfare; lest this should be mistaken, and beget in them an opinion of their own strengh for the battle, the apostle leads them out of themselves for this strength, even to the Lord; *Be strong in the Lord.* From whence observe.

Doct. That the Christian's strength lies in the Lord, not in himself. The strength of the general, in other hosts, lies in his troops; he flies, as a great commander once said to his soldiers, upon their wings; if their feathers be clipt, their power broken, he is lost: But in the army of saints, the strength of every saint, yea, of the whole host of saints, lies in the Lord of hosts. God can overcome his enemies without their hands; but they cannot so much as defend themselves without his arm. 2. It is one of God's names, *the strength of Israel*, 1 Sam. xv. 19. He was the strength of David's heart: without him this valiant worthy (that could, when held up in his arms, defy him that defied a whole army) behaves himself strangely for fear, at a word or two that dropt from the Philistine's mouth. He was the strength of his hands. *He taught his fingers to fight*, and so he is the strength of all his saints in this war against sin and satan. Some propound a question, whether there be a sin committed in the world, in which satan hath not a part? But if the question were, whether there be any holy action performed without the special assistance of God concurring, that is resolved, John xv. 5.—*Without me you can do nothing.* Thinking strength of God, 2 Cor. iii. 5. *Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.* We apostles, we saints that have habitual grace, yet this lies like water at the bottom of a well, which will not ascend with all our pumping, till God

God pour in his exciting grace, and then it comes. To will is more than to think; to exert our will into action, more than both; these are of God, Phil. ii. 13. *It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure.* He makes the heart new, and having made it fit for heavenly motion, setting every wheel (as it were) in its right place, then he winds it up by his actuating grace, and sets it on going, the thoughts to stir, the will to move, and make towards the holy object presented; yet here the chariot is set, and cannon cannot ascend the hill of action till God puts his shoulder to the wheel, Rom. vii. *To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.* God is at the bottom of the ladder, and at the top also, the author and finisher; yea, helping and lifting the soul at every round in his ascent to any holy action. Well, now the Christian is set on work, how long will he keep close to it? Alas, poor soul, no longer than he is held up by the same hand, that empowered him at first! He hath soon wrought out the strength received, and therefore to maintain the tenure of a holy course, there must be renewing strength from heaven every moment, which David knew; and therefore when his heart was in as holy a frame as ever he felt it; and his people by their free-will offering declared the same; yet even then he prays, that God would *keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of his people, and establish their hearts to him*, 1 Chron. xxix. 18. He adored the mercy that made them willing, and then he implores his further grace to strengthen them, and tie a knot, that these precious pearls, newly strung on their hearts, may not slip off. The Christian, when fullest of divine communications, is but a glass without a foot: he cannot stand, or hold what he hath received, any longer than God holds him in his strong hand. Therefore Christ, when bound for heaven, and ready to take his leave of his children, bespeaks his Father's care of them in his absence, John xvii. *Father, keep them:* As if he had said, they must not be left alone, they are poor shiftless children, that can neither stand nor go without help: They will lose the grace I have given them, and fall into those temptations which I kept them from, while I was with them, if they be out of thy eye or arms but one moment; and therefore, *Father, keep them.*

Again, Consider the Christian as addressing himself to any duty of God's worship, still his strength is in the Lord; would he pray? Where will he find matter for his prayer? Alas! *he knows not what to pray for as he ought*, Rom. viii. Let him alone, and he will soon pray himself into some temptation or other, and cry for that which were cruelty in God to give; and therefore God puts words in our mouths, *take words with you, and say*, Hos. xiv. 2. Well now he hath put words into his mouth,

mouth, alas, they will freeze in his very lips, if he hath not some heart-heating affections to thaw the tap; and where shall this fire be had? Not a spark to be found on his own hearth, except it be some strange fire of natural desires, which will not serve: Whence then must the fire come to thaw the icyness of the heart, but from heaven? The spirit he must stretch himself upon the soul, (as the prophet on the child) and then the soul will come to some kindly warmth, and heavenly heat in his affections; the spirit must groan, and then the soul will groan; he helps us to these sighs and groans which turn the sails of prayer: He dissolves the heat, and then it bursts out of the heart by groans of the lips, by heavenly rhetoric; out of the eyes, as from a flood-gate, with tears; yet further, now the creature is enabled to wrestle with God in prayer: What will he get by all this? Suppose he be weak in grace, is he able to pray himself strong, or corruption weak? No, this is not to be found in prayer, as an act of the creature: This drops from heaven also, Psalm cxxxviii. 2. *In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me, and gavest me strength in my soul.* David received it in duty, but had it not from his duty, but from his God. He did not pray himself strong, but God strengthened him in his prayer. Well, cast your eye once more upon the Christian, as engaging in another ordinance of hearing the word preached. The soul's strength to hear the word is from God: *he opens the heart to attend*, Acts xvi. 14. Yea, he opens the understanding of the saint to receive the word, so as to conceive what it meant. It is like Sampson's riddle, which we cannot unfold without his heifer: He opens the womb of the soul to conceive by it, as the understanding to conceive of it, that the barren soul becomes a joyful mother of children. David sat for half a year under the public lectures of the law, and the womb of his heart shut up, till Nathan comes, and God with him; and now is the time of life, he conceives presently; yea, and brings forth in the same day, falling presently into the bitter pangs of sorrow for his sins, which went not over till he had cast them forth in that sweet Psalm li. Why should this one word work more than all the former, but that God now struck in with his word, which he did not before? He is, therefore, said, *to teach his people to profit*, Isaiah xlviii. 17. He sits in heaven that teacheth hearts. When God's spirit (who is the head master) shall call a soul from his usher to himself, and say, Soul, you have not gone the way to thrive by hearing the word; thus and thus conceive of such a truth, improve such a promise; presently the eyes of his understanding open, and his heart burns within him while he speaks to him. Thus you see the truth of this point, that the Christian's strength is in the Lord. Now we shall give some demonstrations.

SECT.

SECT. I.—Reas. 1. The first reason may be taken from the nature of the saints, and their grace: both are creatures, they and their grace also; now, *inesse est deesse creaturæ.* 'Tis in the very nature of the creature to depend on God, its maker, both for being and operation. Can you conceive an accident to be out of its subject, whiteness out of the wall, or some other subject? 'Tis as impossible that the creature should be, or act, without strength from God: This, to be, act in and of himself, is so incommunicable a property of the Deity, that he cannot impart it to his creature: *God is, and there is none besides him*; when God made the world, it is said, indeed, that he ended his work; that is, of creation: he made no new species and kinds of creatures more; but to this day he hath not ended his work of providence: *Hitherto my Father worketh*, saith Christ, John v. 17. that is, in preserving, and empowering what he hath made with strength to be and act, and therefore he is said to hold our souls in life. Works of art, which man makes, when finished, may stand some time without the workman's help, as the house, when the carpenter that made it is dead; but God's works of nature and grace are never off his hand, and therefore, as the Father is said to work hitherto for the preservation of the works of nature, so the Son, to whom is committed the work of redemption, he tells us he worketh also. Neither ended he his work when he rose again, any other way than his Father did the work of creation. God made an end of making, so Christ made an end of purchasing mercy, grace, and glory, for believers, by once dying; and as God rested at the end of the creation, so he, when he had wrought eternal redemption, and *by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*, Heb. i. 3. But he ceased not to work by his intercession with God for us, and by his spirit in us for God, whereby he upholds his saints, their graces, and comforts in life, without which they would run to ruin. Thus we see, as grace is a creature, the Christian depends on God for his strength. But further,

Secondly, The Christian's grace is not only a creature, but a weak creature, conflicting with enemies stronger than itself, and therefore cannot keep the field without an auxiliary strength from heaven. The weakest goes to the wall, if no succour comes in. Grace in this life is but weak, like a king in the cradle, which gives advantage to satan to carry on his plots more strongly, to the disturbance of this young king's reign in the soul; yea, he would soon make an end of the war, in the ruin of the believer's grace, did not heaven take the Christian into protection. 'Tis true, indeed, grace, wherever it is, hath a principle in itself, that makes it desire and endeavour to preserve itself according to its strength; but, being overpowered, must perish, except assisted by God:

God: as fire in green wood (which deads and damps the part kindled) will in time go out, except blown up, or more fire put to that little; so will grace in the heart. God brings his grace into the heart by conquest: Now, as in a conquered city, though some yield and become true subjects to the conqueror, yet others plot how they may shake off his yoke; and therefore it requires the same power to keep, as was to win it at first. The Christian hath an unregenerate part, that is discontented at this new change in the heart, and disdains as much to come under the sweet government of Christ's sceptre, as the Sodomites, that Lot should judge them. What, this fellow, a stranger, controul us? And satan heads this mutinous route against the Christian: So that if God should not continually reinforce this his new-planted colony in the heart, the very natives (I mean corruptions) that are left, would come out of their dens and holes, where they lie lurking, and eat up the little grace the holiest on earth hath; it would be as bread to these devourers.

3. A third demonstration may be taken from the grand design which God propounds to himself in the saints salvation; yea, in the transaction of it from first to last; and that is two-fold.

First, God would bring his saints to heaven in such a way as might be most expressive of his dear love and mercy to them.

Secondly, He would so express his love and mercy to them, as might rebound back to him in the highest advance of his own glory possible: Now, how becoming this is to both, that saints should have all their ability for every step they take in the way to heaven, will soon appear.

1. This way of communicating strength to saints, gives a double accent to God's love and mercy.

First, It distils a sweetness into all that the believer hath or doth, when he finds any comfort in his bosom, any enlargement of heart to duty, any support under temptations: to consider whence come all these, what friend sends them in? They come not from my own cistern, or any creature's: O 'tis my God that hath been here, and left his sweet perfume of comfort behind him in my bosom; my God, that hath (unawares to me) filled my sails with the gales of his spirit, and brought me off the flats of my own deadness, where I lay aground. O 'tis his sweet spirit that held my head, stayed my heart in such an affliction and temptation, or else I had gone away in a fainting fit of unbelief. How can this chuse but endear God to a gracious soul? His succours coming so immediately from heaven, which would be lost, if the Christian had any strength to help himself (though this stock of strength came at first from God), which, think you, speaks more love and condescension, for a prince to give a pension to a favourite, on which he may live by his own care; or for this prince to take the chief

chief care upon himself, and come from day to day to this man's house, and look into his cupboard, and see what provision he hath, what expence he is at, and so constantly to provide for the man from time to time? Possibly some proud spirit, that likes to be his own man, or loves his means better than his prince, would prefer the former; but one that is ambitious to have the heart and love of his prince, would be ravished with the latter. Thus God doth with his saints; the great God comes and looks into their cupboard, and sees how they are laid in, and sends in accordingly as he finds them. Your heavenly father knows you have need of these things, and you shall have them. He knows you need strength to pray, hear, suffer for him, and *in ipsa hora dabitur*.

Secondly, This way of God's dealing with his saints adds to the fulness and stability of their strength. Were the stock in our own hands, we should soon prove broken merchants. God knows we are but leaking vessels; when fullest, we could not hold it long; and therefore, to make all sure, he set us under the streamings forth of his strength, and a leaking vessel, under a cock, gets what it loseth. Thus we have our leakage supplied continually. This was the provision God made for Israel in the wilderness; he clave the rock, and the rock followed them.—They had not only a draught at present, but it ran in a stream after them; so that you hear no more of their complaints for water: This rock was Christ. Every believer hath Christ at his back, following him with strength as he goes, for every condition and trial. One flower with the root is worth many in a posy, which, though sweet, yet do not grow, but wither as we wear them in our bosoms. God's strength, as the root, keeps our grace lively, without which, though as orient as Adam's was, it would die.

2. The second design God hath in his saints happiness, is, that he may so express his mercy and love to them, as may rebound back to him in the highest advance of his own glory therein, Eph. i. 4. 12. which is fully attained in his way of empowering saints, by a strength not of their own, but of their God's sending, as they are put in expence. Had God given his saints a stock of grace to have set up with, and left them to the improvement of it, he had been magnified indeed, because it was more than God did owe the creature; but he had not been omnified as now, when not only the Christian's first strength to close with Christ is from God, but he is beholden still to God for the exercise of that strength, in every action of his Christian course. As a child that travels in his father's company, all is paid for, but his father carries the purse, not himself; so the Christian's shot is discharged in every condition, but he cannot say, This I did, or that

I suffered; but God wrought all in me, and for me. The very comb of pride is cut here, no room for any self-exalting thoughts. The Christian cannot say, that I am a saint is mercy; but being a saint, that my faith is strong, this is the child of my own care and watchfulness. Alas, poor Christian! Who kept thine eye waking, and stirred up thy care? Was not this the offspring of God, as well as thy faith at first? No saint shall say of heaven when he comes there, This is heaven which I have built by the power of my might. No: *Jerusalem above is a city, whose builder and maker is God.* Every grace, yea, degree of grace, is a stone in that building, the top-stone whereof is laid in glory, where saints shall more plainly see, how God was not only founder to begin, but benefactor also to finish the same. The glory of the work shall not be crumbed, and piece-mealed out, some to God, and some to creature; but all entirely paid in to God, and he acknowledged all in all.

SECT. II. *Use* 1. Is the Christian's strength in the Lord, not in himself? Surely then the christless person must needs be a poor impotent creature, void of all strength and ability of doing any thing of itself towards its own salvation. If the ship, launched, rigged, and with her sails spread, cannot stir, till the wind come fair, and fill them; much less can the timber that lies in the carpenter's yard hew and frame itself into a ship. If the living tree cannot grow except the root communicates its sap, much less can a dead rotten stake in the hedge, which has no root, live of its own accord. In a word, if a Christian, that hath his spiritual life of grace, cannot exercise this life, without strength from above; then surely, one void of this new life, dead in sins and trespasses, can never be able to beget this in himself, or concur to the production of it. The state of unregeneracy is a state of impotency; *when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*, Rom. v. 6. And as Christ found the lump of mankind covered with the ruins of their lapsed estate (no more able to raise themselves from under the weight of God's wrath, which lay upon them, than one buried under the rubbish of a fallen house, is to free himself of that weight without help,) so the spirit finds sinners in as helpless a condition, as unable to repent, or believe on Christ for salvation, as they were of themselves to purchase it. Confounded therefore for ever be the language of those sons of pride, who cry up the power of nature, as if man, with his own brick and slime of natural abilities, were able to rear up such a building, whose top may reach heaven itself. *It is not of him that willeth or runneth, but God that sheweth mercy*, Rom. ix. 16. God himself hath scattered such Babel-builders in the imaginations of their hearts, who raiseth this spiritual temple in the souls of men, not by might, nor by a

power of their own, but by his spirit; that so grace, grace, might be proclaimed before it for ever. And therefore, if any yet in their natural estate would become wise to salvation, let them first become fools in their own eyes, and renounce their carnal wisdom, which perceives not the things of God; and beg wisdom of God, who giveth, and upbraideth not. If any would have strength to believe, let them become weak, and die to their own; for *by strength shall no man prevail*, 1 Sam. ii. 9.

Use 2. Secondly, Doth the Christian's strength lie in God, not in himself? This may for ever keep the Christian humble, when most enlarged in duty, most assisted in his Christian course. Remember, Christian, when thou hast thy best suit on, who made it? who paid for it? Thy grace, thy comfort, is neither the work of thy own hands, nor the price of thy own desert; be not for shame proud of another's cost. That assistance will not long stay, which becomes a nurse to thy pride; thou art not Lord of that assistance thou hast. Thy father is wise, who, when he alloweth thee most for thy spiritual maintenance, even then keeps the law in his own hands, and can soon curb thee, if thou growest wanton with his grace. Walk humbly therefore before thy God, and husband well that strength thou hast, remembering that it is borrowed strength. *Nemo prodiget quod mendicat.* Who will waste what he begs? or who will give that beggar that spends idly his alms? When thou hast most, thou canst not be long from thy God's door. And how canst thou look him in the face for more, who hast embezzled what thou hast received?

CHAP. III.

Of acting our Faith on the Almighty Power of God.

THE third branch followeth, which contains an encouraging amplification annexed to the exhortation, in these words: *And in the power of his might*, where a twofold inquiry is requisite for the explication of the phrase. First, what these words import, *The power of his might?* Secondly, What it is to *be strong in the power of his might?*

For the first, *the power of his might:* It is an Hebraism, and imports nothing but his mighty power; like that phrase, Eph. i. 6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace*, that is, to the praise of his glorious grace. And his mighty power imports no less than his almighty power; sometimes the Lord is stiled *mighty and strong*, as Psal. xxiv. 8. sometimes most mighty, sometimes Almighty; no less is meant in all, than God's infinite almighty power.

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For the second, To be strong in the mighty power, or power of the Lord's might, implies these two acts of faith.

First, a settled firm persuasion, that the Lord is almighty in power. *Be strong in the power of his might;* that is, be strongly rooted in your faith, concerning this one foundation-truth, that God is almighty.

Secondly, It implies a further act of faith, not only to believe that God is almighty, but also that this almighty power of God is engaged for its defence: So as to bear up in the midst of all trials and temptations undauntedly, leaning on the arm of God Almighty, as if it were his own strength; for that is the apostle's drift—as to beat us off from leaning on our own strength, so to encourage the Christian to make use of God's almighty power, as freely as if it were his own, whenever assaulted by satan in any kind. As a man set upon by a thief, stirs up all the force and strength he hath in his whole body to defend himself, and offend his adversary, so the apostle bids the Christian *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*, that is, Soul, away to thy God, whose mighty power is all intended and devoted by God himself for thy succour and defence. Go strengthen and intrench thyself in it by a stedfast faith, as that which shall be laid out to the utmost for thy good. From whence these two notes, I conceive, will draw out the fatness of the words.

1. That it should be the Christian's great care and endeavour, in all temptations and trials, to strengthen his faith on the almighty power of God.

2. The Christian's duty and care is not only to believe that God is almighty, but strongly by faith to rest on this almighty power of God, as engaged for his help and succour, in all his trials and temptations.

Doct. First, It should be the Christian's great care, in all temptations and trials, to strengthen his faith on the almighty power of God. When God holds forth himself as an object of the soul's trust and confidence in any great strait or undertaking, commonly this attribute of his almighty power is presented in the promise, as the surest hold-fast for faith to lay hold on; as a father in a rugged way gives his child his arm to lay hold by; so doth God usually reach forth his almighty power for his saints, to exercise their faith on. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whose faith God tried above most of his saints before or since, for not one of those great things which were promised to them, did they live to see performed in their days; and how doth God make known himself to them for their support, but by displaying this attribute, Exod. vi. 3. *I appeared unto Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, by the name of God Almighty.* This was all they had to keep house with all their days; with which they lived comfortably, and

died triumphantly, bequeathing the promise to their children, not doubting (because God Almighty had promised) of the performance. Thus, Isa. xxvi. where great mercies are promised to Judah, and a song penned before-hand, to be sung on that gaudy day of their salvation; yet because there was a sharp winter of captivity to come between the promise, and the spring time of the promise; therefore to keep their faith alive in this space, the prophet calls them up to act their faith on God Almighty, ver. 4. *Trust ye in the Lord Jehovah, for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength.* So when his saints are going into the furnace of persecution, what now doth he direct their faith to carry to prison, to stake with them, but his almighty power? 1 Pet. iv. 19. *Let them that suffer commit the keeping of their souls to him, as to a faithful Creator.* Creator is a name of almighty power. We shall now give some reasons of the point.

Reas. 1. First, Because it is no easy work to make use of this truth, (how plain and clear soever it now appears) in great plunges of temptation, that God is almighty: to vindicate this name of God from those evil reports, which satan and carnal reason raise against it, requires a strong faith indeed. I confess this principle is a piece of natural divinity: That light which finds out a Deity, will evince (if followed close) this God to be Almighty; yet in a carnal heart, it is like a rusty sword, hardly drawn out of the scabbard, and so of little or no use. Such truths are so imprisoned in natural conscience, that they seldom get a fair hearing in the sinner's bosom, till God gives them a goal-delivery, and brings them out of their house of bondage, where they are shut up in unrighteousness, with the high hand of his convincing spirit. Then, and not till then, the soul will believe God is holy, merciful, almighty; nay, some of God's peculiar people, and not the meanest for grace amongst them, have had their faith for a time set in this slough, much ado to get over those difficulties and improbabilities, which sense and reason have objected, so as to rely on the Almighty power of God, with a notwithstanding. Moses himself, a star of the first magnitude for grace, yet see how his faith blinks and twinkles, till he wades out of the temptation: Numb. xi. 21. *The people amongst whom I am, are six hundred thousand, and thou hast said, I will give them flesh that they may eat a whole month; shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them?* This holy man had lost the sight, for a time, of the Almighty power of God; and now he is projecting how this should be done; as if he had said, in plain terms, How can this be accomplished; for so God interprets his reasoning, ver. 23. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short?* So Mary, John xi. 32. *Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.* And her sister, Martha,

Martha, ver. 39. *Lord, by this time he stinketh.* Both gracious women, yet both betrayed the weakness of their faith on the almighty power of Christ, one limiting him to place; If thou hadst been here, he had not died; as if Christ could not have saved his life absent, as well as present; sent his health to him, as well as brought it with him. The other to time: Now he stinketh: as if Christ had brought his physick too late, and the grave would not deliver up its prisoner at Christ's command. And hast thou such an high opinion of thyself, Christian, that thy faith needs not thy utmost care and endeavour, for further establishment on the almighty power of God, when thou seest such as these dash their foot against this kind of temptation?

The second reason may be taken from the absolute necessity of this act of faith above others, to support the Christian in the hour of temptation. All the Christian's strength and comfort is fetched without doors, and he hath none to send on his errand but faith: This goes to heaven, and knocks God up; as he in the parable, his neighbour at midnight for bread: Therefore when faith fails, and the soul hath none to go to market for supplies, there must needs be a poor house kept in the mean time. Now faith is never quite laid up, till the soul denies, or at least questions the power of God. Indeed, when the Christian disputes the will of God, whispering within his own bosom, Will he pardon? Will he save? This may make faith go haltingly to the throne of grace, but not knock the soul off from seeking the face of God; even then, faith on the power of God will bear it company thither: *If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean*, Matth. viii. 2. If thou wilt, thou canst pardon, thou canst purge: But when the soul concludes he cannot pardon, cannot save, this shoots faith to the heart, so that the soul falls at the foot of satan, not able more to resist. Now it grows listless to duty, indifferent whether it pray or not; as one that sees the well dry, breaks or throws away his pitcher.

Thirdly, Because God is very tender of this flower of his crown, this part of his name: indeed he cannot spell it right, and leave out this letter; for that is God's name, whereby he is known from all his creatures. Now, man may be called wise, merciful, mighty: God only all-wise, all-merciful, all-mighty; so when we leave out this syllable *all*, we nick-name God, and call him by his creature's name, which he will not answer to.—Now the tenderness that God shews to this prerogative of his appears in three particulars.

First, in the strict command he lays on his people, to give him the glory of his power, Isa. viii. 12, 13. *Fear ye not their fear, but sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself;* that is, in this sad posture of your affairs, when your enemies associate, and you seem

a lost people to the eye of reason, not able to contest with such united powers which beset you on every side: Now I charge you, sanctify me, in giving me the glory of my almighty power; believe that your God is able of himself, without any other, to defend you, and destroy them.

Secondly, In his severity to his dearest children, when they stagger in their faith, and come not off roundly (without reasoning and disputing the case) to rely on his almighty power; Zacharias did but ask the angel, How shall I know this, because I am an old man, and my wife stricken in years? Yet for bewraying therein his unbelief, had a sign indeed given him, but such a one as did not only strengthen his faith, but severely punish his unbelief; for he was struck dumb upon the place. God loves his children should believe his word, nor dispute his power; so true is that of Luther, *Deus amat curristas non quæristas.*— That which gave accent to Abraham's faith, Rom. iv. 21. was that he was *fully persuaded, that what God had promised, he was able to perform.*

Thirdly, In the way God takes of giving his choicest mercies and greatest salvations to his people, wherein he lays the scene of his providence so, that when he hath done, it may be said, almighty power was here. And therefore God commonly puts down those means and second causes, which, if they stood about his work, would blind and hinder the full prospect thereof in affecting the same, 2 Cor. i. 9. *We received the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.* Christ stayed while Lazarus was dead, that he might draw the eyes of their faith more singly to look on his power, by raising his dead friend, rather than curing him, being sick, which would not have carried so full a conviction of almightiness with it. Yea, he suffers a contrary power many times to arise in that very juncture of time, when he intends the mercy to his people, that he may rear up the more magnificent pillar of remembrance to his own power, in the ruin of that which contests with him. Had God brought Israel out of Egypt in the time of those Kings which knew Joseph, most likely they might have had a friendly departure and an easy deliverance; but God reserves this for the reign of that proud Pharoah, who shall cruelly oppress them, and shall venture his kingdom, but he will satisfy his lust upon them. And why must this be the time? But that God would bring them forth with a stretched-out arm; the magnifying of his power was God's great design, Exod. ix. 16. *In very deed, for this cause have I raised thee up, to show in thee my power, and that my name may be declared throughout the earth.*

Fourthly, In the prevalency which an argument that is pressed from

from his Almighty power hath with God. It was the last string Moses had to his bow, when he begged the life of Israel, Num. xiv. 16. *The nations which have heard the fame of thee, will speak, saying, Because the Lord was not able, &c.* and ver. 17. *Let the power of my Lord be great;* and with this he hath their pardon thrown him.

The application of this point will fall under the next, which is,

CHAP. IV.

Of acting our Faith on the Almighty Power of God, as engaged for our help.

Doct. THAT it is the saints duty, and should be their care, not only to believe God Almighty; but also strongly to believe that this almighty power of God is theirs (that is engaged to their defence and help) so as to make use of it in all straits and temptations.

SECT. I. First, I shall prove that the almighty power of God is engaged for the Christian's defence; with the grounds of it.

Secondly, Why the Christian should strongly act his faith on this.

First, The almighty power of God is engaged for the saints defence; God brought Israel out of Egypt with an high hand: but did he set them down on the other side the Red Sea, to find and force their way to Canaan, by their own policy or power? When he had opened the iron gate of their house of bondage, and brought them into the open fields, did he vanish as the angel from Peter, when out of prison? No: as a man carries his son, so the Lord bare them in all the way they went, Deut. i. 31. This doth lively set forth the saints march to heaven: God brings a soul out of spiritual Egypt by his converting grace; that is, the day of his power, wherein he makes the soul willing to come out of satan's clutches. Now when the saint is upon his march, all the country riseth upon him. How shall this poor creature pass the pikes, and get safely by all his enemies borders? God himself infolds him in the arm of his everlasting strength. *We are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation*, 1 Pet i. 5. The power of God is that *shoulder* on which Christ carries his sheep home, rejoicing all the way he goes, Luke xv. 15. These everlasting arms of his strength are those eagle's wings, upon which the saints are both tenderly and securely conveyed to glory, Exod. xix. 4. There is a five-fold tie or engagement that lies upon God's power, to be the saints life-guard.

First, The near relation he hath to his saints; they are his own dear children; every one takes care of his own; the silly hen, how doth she bustle and bestir herself to gather her brood under her wing when the kite appears? No care like that which nature teacheth. How much more will God, who is father of such dispositions in his creature, stir up his whole strength to defend his children? *He said, They are my people, so he became their Saviour*, Isa. xxxiii. 8. As if God had said, Shall I sit still with my hand in my bosom, while my own people are thus misused before my face? I cannot bear it. The mother, as she sits in her house, hears one shriek, and knows the voice, cries out, O 'tis my child, away she throws all, and runs to him. Thus God takes the alarm of his childrens cry, *I heard Ephraim bemoaning himself*, saith the Lord; his cry pierced his ear, and his ear affected his bowels, and his bowels called up his power to the rescue of him.

Secondly, The dear love he beareth to his saints engageth his power. He that hath God's heart, cannot want his arm.—Love in the creature commands all the other affections, sets all the powers of the whole man on work; thus in God, love sets all his other attributes on work; when God once pitched his thoughts on doing good to lost man, then wisdom fell on projecting the way; Almighty power then undertook to raise the fabric according to wisdom's model. All are ready to effect what God saith he likes. Now the believing soul is an object of God's choicest love, even the same with which he loves his Son, John xvii. 26.

First, God loves the believer as the birth of his everlasting counsel; when a soul believes, then God's eternal purpose and counsel concerning him (whom he chose in Christ before the foundation of the world, and with whom his thoughts went so long big) brings forth. And how must God needs love that creature, whom he carried so long in the womb of his eternal purpose? This goodly fabric of heaven and earth hath not been built, but as a stage whereon he would in time act what he decreed in heaven of old, concerning the saving of thee, and a few more his elect; and therefore, according to the same rate of delight, with which God pleased and entertained himself in the thoughts of this before the world was, must he needs rejoice over the soul now believing, with love and complacency inconceivable; and God having brought his counsel thus far towards its issue, surely will raise all the power he hath, rather than be disappointed of his glory, within a few steps of home; I mean, his whole design in the believer's salvation: the Lord who hath chosen his saints (as Christ prays for Joshua their representative) will rebuke satan and all their enemies, Zech. iii.

Secondly,

Secondly, God loves his saints as the purchase of his Son's blood; they cost him dear; and that which is so hardly got, shall not be easily lost. He that was willing to expend his son's blood to gain them, will not deny his power to keep them.

Thirdly, God loves the saints for their likeness to himself, so that if he loves himself, he cannot but love himself appearing in them; and as he loves himself in them, so he defends himself in defending them. What is it in a saint that enrageth hell, but the image of God, without which the war would soon be at an end? It is the hatred the panther hath to man that makes him fly at his picture; *for thy sake are we slain all the day long:* And if the quarrel be God's, surely the saint shall not go forth to war at his own cost.

Thirdly, The covenant engageth God's almighty power, Gen. xvii. 1. *I am the Almighty God, walk before me.* There is a league offensive and defensive between God and his saints: he gives it under his hand, that he will put forth the whole power of his Godhead for them, 1 Chron. xvii. 24. *The Lord of hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel.* God doth not parcel himself out by retail, but gives his saints leave to challenge whatever a God hath as theirs; and let him, whoever he is, sit in God's throne, and take away his crown, that can fasten any untruth on the Holy One; as his name is, so his nature, a God keeping covenant for ever. The promises stand as the mountains about Jerusalem, never to be removed; the weak as well as the strong Christian is within the line of communication. Were saints to fight out in open field by the strength of their own grace, then the strong were more likely to stand, and the weak to fall in battle; but both, castled in the covenant, are alike safe.

Fourthly, The saints dependence on God, and expectation from God, in all their straits, oblige this power for their succour: Whither doth a gracious soul fly in any want or danger from sin, satan, or his instruments, but to his God? As naturally as the coney to her burrow, Psal. lvii. 3. *At what time I am afraid,* saith David, *I will trust in thee:* He tells God he will make bold with his house to step into, when taken in any storm; and doth not question his welcome. Thus when Saul hunted him, he left a city of gates and bars, to trust God in open field. Indeed all the saints are taught the same lesson, to renounce their own strength, and rely on the power of God; their own policy, and cast themselves on the wisdom of God; their own righteousness, and expect all from the pure mercy of God in Christ; which act of faith is so pleasing to God, that such a soul shall never be ashamed, Psal. ix. 18. *The expectation of the poor shall not perish.* A heathen could say, when a bird (scared by a hawk) flew into his bosom, I will not betray thee unto thy enemy, seeing thou

thou comest for sanctuary unto me. How much less will God yield up a soul unto its enemy, when it takes sanctuary in his name, saying, Lord, I am hunted with such a temptation, dogged with such a lust; either thou must pardon it, or I am damned; mortify it, or I shall be a slave to it; take me into the bosom of thy love for Christ's sake; castle me in the arms of thy everlasting strength; it is in thy power to save me from, or give me up into the hands of my enemy; I have no confidence in myself or any other: into thy hands I commit my cause, myself, and rely on thee: This dependence of a soul undoubtedly will awaken the almighty power of God for such a one's defence. He hath sworn the greatest oath that can come out of his blessed lips, even by himself, that such as thus fly for refuge to hope in him, shall have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17. This indeed may give the saint the greater boldness of faith to expect kind entertainment, when he repairs to God for refuge, because he cannot come before he is looked for: God having set up his name and promises as a strong tower, both calls his people into these chambers, and expects they should betake themselves thither.

Fifthly, Christ's presence and employment in heaven lays a strong engagement on God to bring his whole force and power into the field, upon all occasions, for his saints defence; one special end of his journey to heaven, and abode there, is, that he might, (as the saints solicitor) be ever interceding for such supplies and succours of his Father, as their exigencies call for; and the more to assure us of the same before he went, he did (as it were) tell us, what heads he meant to go upon in his intercession, when he should come there: one of which was this, that his Father should keep his children, while they were to stay in the world, from the evil thereof, John xvii. 15. Neither doth Christ take upon him this work of his own head, but hath the same appointment of his Father, for what he now prays in heaven, as he had for what he suffered on earth: He that ordained him a priest to die for sinners, did not then strip him of his priestly garments (as Aaron), but appoints him to ascend in them to heaven, where he sits a priest for ever by God's oath. And this office of intercession was erected purely in mercy to believers, that they might have full content given them for the performance of all that God hath promised; so that Jesus Christ lies lieger at court as our ambassador, to see all carried fairly between God and us according to agreement: And if Christ follows his business close, and be faithful in his place to believers, all is well: And doth it not behove him to be so, who intercedes for such dear relations? Suppose a King's son should get out of a besieged city, where he had left his wife and children (whom he loves as his own soul), and these all ready to die by sword or famine, if

supply

supply come not the sooner; could this prince, when arrived at his father's house, please himself with the delights of the court, and forget the distress of his family? Or rather, would he not come post to his father (having their cries and groans always in his ears), and, before he ate or drank, do his errand to his father, and intreat him, if ever he loved him, that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege, rather than any of his dear relations should perish? Surely, then, though Christ be at the top of his preferment, and out of the storm in regard of his own person, yet his children, left behind in the midst of sins, satan, and the world's batteries, are in his heart, and shall not be forgotten a moment by him. The care he takes in our business appeared in the speedy dispatch he made of his spirit to his apostles supply, when he ascended; which, as soon almost as he was warm in his seat at his Father's right hand, he sent, to the incomparable comfort of his apostles and us, that to this day, yea, to the end of the world do, or shall believe on him.

SECT. II.—The second branch of the point follows: That saints should eye this power of God as engaged for them; and press it home upon their souls, till they silence all doubts and fears about the matter; which is the importance of this exhortation: *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*—Fortify and entrench your souls within the breast-work of this attribute of God's mighty power made over to you by God himself.

First, It is the end of all promises to be security to our faith; so of those in particular, where his Almighty power is expressly engaged, that we may count this attribute our portion, and reap the comfort it yields, as freely as one may the crop of his own field. *Walk before me*, saith God to Abraham, *I am God Almighty;* rest on this as thy portion, and live upon it: The apostle, Heb. xiii. 6. teacheth us what use to make of promises, ver. 5. *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, there is the promise; and the inference, which he teacheth us to draw by faith from this, follows, ver. 6. *So we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper.* We, that is, every believer, may boldly say, that is, we may conclude, God will help; not sneakingly, timorously; perhaps he will; but we may boldly assert it in the face of men and devils, because he that is almighty hath said it. Now for a Christian not to strengthen his faith on this incomparable sweet attribute, but to sit down with a few weak unsettled hopes, when he may, yea, ought to be strong in the faith of such promises; what is it but to undervalue the blessing of such promises? As if one should promise another house and land, and bid him take them as sure to himself as the law can bind, and he should take no care to effect this, would it not be interpreted as a slighting of his friend's kindness?

kindness? Is it a small matter, that God passeth over his almighty power by promise to us, and bids us make it as sure to ourselves as we can by faith, and we neglect this, leaving the writings of the promises unsealed in our hearts?

Secondly, Our obedience and comfort are strong or weak, as our faith is on this principle.

First, Our obedience, that, being a child of faith, partakes of its parent's strength or weakness; Abraham being strong in faith, what an heroic act of obedience did he perform in offering up his son? His faith being well set on the power of God, he carries that without staggering, which would have laid a weak faith on the ground. No act of faith more strengthens for duty, than that which eyes God's almighty power engaged for its assistance.—*Go in this thy might*, said God to Gideon, *have not I called thee?* as if he had said, Can I not, will I not carry thee through thy work? Away goes Gideon in the faith of this, and doth wonders. This brought the righteous man from the east of God's foot, though he knew not whither he went, yet he knew with whom he went, God Almighty. But take a soul not persuaded of this, how uneven and unstable is he in his obediential course? Every threat from man, if mighty, dismays him, because his faith is not fixed on the Almighty, and therefore sometimes he will shift off a duty to comply with man, and betray his trust into the hands of a sorry creature, because he hath fleshly eyes to behold the power of man, but wants a spiritual eye to see God at his back, to protect him with his almighty power; which, were his eyes open to see, he would not be so routed in his thoughts at the approach of a weak creature:—*Should such a man as I flee?* saith good Nehemiah, Neh. vi. 11. He was newly come from the throne of grace, where he had called in the help of the Almighty, v. 9. *O God, strengthen my hands.* And truly now he will rather die upon the place, than disparage his God, with a dishonourable retreat.

Secondly, The Christian's comfort increaseth or waneth, as the aspect of his faith is to the power of God. Let the soul question that, or his interest in it, and his joy gusheth out, even as blood out of a broken vein; it is true, a soul may scramble to heaven with much ado, by a faith of recumbency, relying on God as able to save, without this persuasion of its interest in God: but such a soul goes with a scant side-wind, or like a ship whose masts are laid by the board, exposed to wind and weather, if others better appointed did not tow it along with them. Many fears, like waves, ever and anon cover such a soul, that it is more under water than above; whereas one that sees itself folded in the arms of Almighty power, O how such a soul goes mounting afore the wind, with her sails filled with joy and peace! Let afflictions come,

come, storms arise, this blessed soul knows where it shall land and be welcome. The name of God is his harbour, where he puts in as boldly as a man steps into his own house, when taken in a shower. He hears God calling him into this and other his attributes, as chambers taken up for him, Isa. xxvi. *Come, my people, enter into thy chambers.* God calls them his, and it were foolish modesty not to own what God gives, Isa. xlv. 24. *Surely shall a man say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength*, that is, I have righteousness in God's righteousness, strength in his strength, so that in this respect Christ can no more say that his strength is his own, and not the believer's, than the husband can say, my body is my own, and not my wife's. A soul persuaded of this, may sing merrily with the sharpest thorn at his breast; so David, Psal. lvii. 7. *My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise.* What makes him so merry in so sad a place as the cave where he now was? He will tell you in ver. 1. where you have him nestling himself under the shadow of God's wings, and now well may he sing care and fear away. A soul thus provided, may lie at ease on a hard bed. Do you not think they sleep as soundly who dwell on London-bridge, as they who live at Whitehall or Cheapside, knowing the waves that roar under them cannot hurt them? Even so may the saints rest quietly over the floods of death itself, and fear no ill.

SECT. III. Is the Almighty Power of God engaged for the saints defence? Surely then they will have a hard pull (the saints enemies I mean) who meddle with them who are so far above their match. The devil was so cunning, that he would have Job out of his trench, his hedge down, before he would fall on; but so desperate are men, they will try the field with the saints, though encircled with the almighty power of God. What folly were it to attempt, or sit down before such a city, which cannot be blocked up so as no relief can get in? The way to heaven cannot. In the church's straitest siege, there is a river which shall make glad this city of God, with seasonable succours from heaven. The saints fresh springs are all from God: and it is as feasible for sorry man to stop the water courses of the clouds, as to dam up those streams, which invincibly glide like veins of water in the earth, from the fountain-head of his mercy, into the bosom of his people: The Egyptians thought they had Israel in a trap, when they saw them march into a nook by the sea-side; They are entangled, they are entangled: and truly so they had been, irrecoverably, had not that almighty power which led them on, engaged to bring them off with honour and safety; well, when they are out of this danger, behold, they are in a wilderness, where nothing is to be had for back or belly, and yet here they shall live for forty years, without trade or tillage, without begging

ging or robbing of any of the neighbour-nations; they shall not be beholden to them for a penny on their way. What cannot Almighty power do to provide for his people? What can it not do to protect them against the power and wrath of their enemies? Almighty power stood between the Israelites and Egyptians; so that (poor creatures) they could not so much as come to see their enemy: God sets up a dark cloud as a blind before their eyes; and all the while, his eye through the cloud is looking them into disorder and confusion. And is the Almighty grown weaker now-a-days, or his enemies stronger, that they promise themselves better success? No, neither: but men are blinder than the saints enemies of old, who sometimes have fled at the appearance of God among his people, crying out, Let us flee, for the Lord fighteth for them. Whereas there be many now-a-days, will rather give the honour of their discomfiture to satan himself, than acknowledge God in the business; more ready to say, the devil fought against them than God. O you that have not yet worn off the impressions which the Almighty power of God hath at any time made upon your spirits, beware of having any thing to do with this generation of men, whoever they are. Come not near their tabernacle, cast not thy lot in amongst them, who are enemies to the saints of the Most High; for they are men devoted to destruction. God so loves his saints that he makes nothing to give the whole nations for their ransom. He ripped open the very womb of Egypt, to save the life of Israel his child, Isa. xliii. 3.

Use 2. Secondly, This shews the dismal deplorable condition of all you, who are yet in a christless state; you have seen a rich mine opened, but not a penny of this treasure comes to your share; truth laden with incomparable comfort, but it is bound for another coast; it belongs to the saints, into whose bosom this truth unlades all her comfort. See God shutting the door upon you, when he sets his children to feast themselves with such dainties, Isa. xlv. 13. *My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty.* God hath his set number, which he provides for; he knows how many he hath in his family: these and no more shall sit down. One chief dish at the saint's board is the almighty power of God; this was set before Abraham, and stands before all his saints, that they may eat to fullness of comfort on it: *But thou shalt be hungry.* He is almighty to pardon; but he will not use it for thee, an impenitent sinner; thou hast not a friend on the bench; not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee: Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of his fellow-attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need; but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect

pect his saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man will rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God sware in his wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into his rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God, consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men, that, like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such an one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with who can sleep so soundly, without any horror or amazement, though they be told, that the Almighty God is under an oath of damning them, body and soul, without timely repentance? O bethink yourselves, sinners, is it wisdom or valour to refuse terms of mercy from God's hands, whose almighty power, if rejected, will soon bring you into the hands of justice? And how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of Almighty God, no tongue can express; no, not they who feel the weight of it.

Use 3. Thirdly, This speaks to you that are saints indeed, be strong in the faith of this truth, make it an article of your creed; with the same faith that you believe there is a God, believe also this God's almighty power is thy sure friend, and then improve it to thy best advantage. As,

First, In agonies of conscience that arise from the greatness of thy sins, fly for refuge unto the almighty power of God. Truly, when a man's sins are displayed in all their bloody colours, and spread forth in their killing aggravations, and the eye of conscience awakened to behold them through the multiplying or magnifying glass of a temptation, they must needs surprise the creature with horror and amazement, till the soul can say with the prophet, for all this huge host, *There is yet more with me than against me.* One Almighty is more than many mighties. All these mighty sins and devils, make not an almighty sin or an almighty devil. Oppose to all the hideous charges brought against thee by them, this only attribute. As the French ambassador once silenced the Spaniard's pride in repeating his master's many titles, with one that drowned them all. God himself, (Hos. xi. 9.) when he had aggravated his people's sins to the height,

height, then, to shew what a God can do, breaks out into a sweet promise: *I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger:* and why not? *I am God, and not man.* I will shew the almightiness of my mercy. Something like our usual phrase, when a child or woman strikes us: I am a man, and not a child, or woman; therefore I will not strike again. The very considering God to be God, supposeth him to be almighty to pardon, as well as to avenge, and this is some relief: but then to consider it is almighty power in bond and covenant to pardon, this is more.—As none can bind God but himself, so none can break the bond himself makes; and are they not his own words, that *he will abundantly pardon?* Isa. lvi. He will multiply to pardon, as if he had said, I will drop mercy with your sin, and spend all I have, rather than let it be said my good is overcome of your evil. It fares with the gracious soul in this case, as with a captain that yields his castle upon gracious terms of having his life spared, and he safely conveyed to his house, there to be settled peaceably in his estate and possession, for all which he hath the general's hand and seal, on which he marched forth; but the rude soldiers assault him, and put him in fear of his life, he appeals to the general (whose honour now is engaged for him), and is presently relieved, and his enemies punished. Thou mayest, poor soul, when accused by satan, molested by his terrors, say, It is God that justifies; I have his hand to it, that I should have my life given me as soon as I laid down my arms and submitted to him, which I desire to do; behold, the gates of my heart are open to let the Prince of Peace in: And is not the Almighty able to perform his promise? I commit myself to him as unto a faithful Creator.

Secondly, Improve this Almighty Power of God, and thy interest therein, in temptations to sin; when thou art overpowered, and fleest before the face of thy strong corruption, or fearest thou shalt one day fall by it, make bold to take hold of this attribute, and reinforce thyself from it again to resist, and, in resisting, to believe a timely victory over it. The Almighty God stands in sight of thee while thou art in the valley fighting, and stays but for a call from thee when distressed in battle, and then he will come to thy rescue: Jehoshaphat cried, when in the throng of his enemies, and the Lord helped him; much more mayest thou promise thyself his succour in thy soul-combats: Betake thyself to the throne of grace with that promise, *Sin shall not have dominion over you:* and before thou urgest it, (the more to help thy faith,) comfort thyself with this, that though this word Almighty is not expressed, yet it is implied in this and every promise; and thou mayest, without adding a tittle to the word of God, read it in thy soul: sin shall not have dominion over you, saith

saith the Almighty God; for this and all his attributes are the constant seal to all his promises. Now soul, put the bond in suit, fear not the recovery; 'tis debt, and so due: He is able whom thou suest, and so there is no fear of losing the charge of the suit; and he that was so gracious to bind himself when he was free, will be so faithful (being able) to perform now he is bound; only while thou expectest the performance of the promise, and the assistance of this Almighty Power against thy corruptions, take heed that thou keep under the shadow of this attribute, and condition of this promise, Psal. xci. 1. The shadow will not cool except in it; what good to have the shadow, though of a mighty rock, when we sit in the open sun? To have Almighty Power engaged for us, and we to throw ourselves out of the protection thereof by bold sallies into the mouth of temptation? The saints falls have been, when they run out of their trench and hold: for, like the conies, they are a weak people in themselves, and their strength lies in the rock of God's almightiness, which is their habitation.

Thirdly, Christian, improve this, when oppressed with the weight of any duty and service, which in thy place and calling lies upon thee. Perhaps thou findest the duty of thy calling too heavy for thy weak shoulders; make bold by faith to lay the heaviest end of thy burden on God's shoulder, which is thine (if a believer) as sure as God can make it by promise. When at any time thou art sick of thy work, and ready to think with Jonas to run from it; encourage thyself with that of God to Gideon, whom he called from the flail to thresh the mountains. Go in this thy might; hath not God called thee? Fall to the work God sets thee about, and thou engagest his strength for thee.—*The way of the Lord is strength.* Run from thy work, and thou engagest God's strength against thee, he will send some storm or other after thee to bring home his runaway servant. How oft hath the coward been killed in a ditch, or under some hedge, when the valiant soldier that stood his ground and kept his place, got off with safety and honour? Art thou called to suffer? Flinch not because thou art afraid thou shalt never be able to bear the cross: God can lay it so even, that thou shalt not feel it; though thou shouldst find no succour till thou comest to the prison door, yea, till thou hast one foot on the ladder, or thy neck on the block, despair not. *In the mount will the Lord be seen.* And in that hour he can give thee such a look of his sweet face, as shall make the blood come in the ghastly face of a cruel death, and appear lovely in thy eye for his sake. He can give thee so much comfort in hand, as thou shalt acknowledge God is aforehand with thee, for all the shame and pain thou canst endure for him: And if it should not amount to this, yet so much as will

bear all thy charges thou canst be put to in the way, lies ready told in that promise, 1 Cor. x. 13. Thou shalt have it at sight, and this may satisfy a Christian, especially if he considers, though he doth not carry so much of heaven's joy about him to heaven as others; yet he shall meet it as soon as he comes to his Father's house, where it is reserved for him. In a word, Christian, rely upon thy God, and make thy daily applications to the throne of grace, for continual supplies of strength: you little think how kindly he takes it, that you will make use of him, the oftener the better, and the more you come for, the more welcome; else why would Christ have told his disciples, *hitherto ye have asked nothing*, but to express his large heart in giving, loth to put his hand to his purse for a little, and therefore by a familiar kind of rhetorick puts them to rise higher in asking, as Naaman when Gehazi asked one talent, entreats him to take two: such a bountiful heart thy God hath, while thou art asking a little peace and joy, he bids thee open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it. Go and ransack thy heart, Christian, from one end to the other, find out thy wants, acquaint thyself with all thy weaknesses, and set them before the Almighty as the widow her empty vessel before the prophet: hadst thou more than thou canst bring, thou mayest have them all filled. God hath strength enough to give, but he hath no strength to deny: here the Almighty himself (with reverence be it spoken) is weak; even a child, the weakest in grace of his family, that can but say, Father, is able to overcome him; and therefore let not the weakness of thy faith discourage thee. No greater motive to the bowels of mercy to stir up almighty power to relieve thee, than thy weakness, when pleaded in the sense of it. The pale face and thin cheeks (I hope) move more with us, than the canting language of a stout sturdy beggar. Thus that soul that comes laden in the sense of his weak faith, love, or patience, the very weakness of them carries an argument along with them for succour.

CHAP. V.

Wherein is answered a grand Objection, that some disconsolate Souls may raise against the former Discourse.

Object. O But, saith some disconsolate Christian, I have prayed again and again for strength against such a corruption, and to this day my hands are weak, and these sons of Zeruiah are so strong, that I am ready to say, All the preachers

ers do but flatter me, that do pour their oil of comfort upon my head, and tell me I shall at last get the conquest of these mine enemies, and see that joyful day wherein with David I shall *sing to the Lord, for delivering me out of the hands of all mine enemies.* I have prayed for strength for such a duty, and find it come off as weakly and deadheartedly as before. If God be with me, by his mighty power to help me, why then is all this befallen me?

Answer 1. First, Look once again, poor heart, into thine own bosom, and see whether thou findest not some strength sent into thee, which thou didst overlook before; this may be, yea, very ordinary in this case, when God answers our prayer not in the letter, or when the thing itself is sent, but it comes in at the back door, while we are expecting it at the fore; and truly thus the friend thou art looking for may be in thine house, and thou not know it. Is not this thy case, poor soul? Thou hast been praying for strength against such a lust, and now thou wouldst have God presently put forth his power to knock it on the head, and lay it for dead, that it should never stir more in thy bosom: Is not this the door thou hast stood looking for God to come in at, and no sight or news of thy God is coming that way? Thy corruption yet stirs, it may be, is more troublesome than before; now thou askest, where is the strength promised to thy relief? Let me entreat thee, before thou layest down that sad conclusion against thy God or self, see whether he hath not conveyed in some strength by another door: Perhaps thou hast not strength to conquer it so soon as thou desirest, but hath he not given further praying strength against it? Thou prayedst before, but now more earnestly; all the powers of thy soul are up to plead with God. Before thou wast more favourable and moderate in thy request, now thou hast a zeal, thou canst take no denial; yea, welcome any thing in the room of thy corruption: Would God but take thy sin and send a cross, thou wouldst bless him: Now, poor soul, is this nothing, no strength? Had not thy God reinforced thee, thy sin would have weakened the spirit of thy prayer, and not encreased it; David began to recover himself, when he began to recover his spirit of prayer. The stronger the cry, the stronger the child, I warrant you. Jacob wrestled, and this is called his strength, Hos. xii. It appeared, there was much of God in him, that he could take such hold of the Almighty, as to keep it, though God seemed to shake him off: If thus thou art enabled, soul, to deal with the God of heaven, no fear but thou shalt be much more able to deal with sin and satan. If God hath given thee so much strength, to wrestle with him above and against denials, thou hast prevailed with the stronger of the two: Overcome God, and he will overcome the other for thee.—

Again, perhaps, thou hast been praying for further strength to be communicated to thee in duty, that thou mightest be more spiritual, vigorous, united, sincere, and the like therein, and yet thou findest thy old distempers hanging about thee, as if thou hadst never acquainted God with thy ail: Well, soul, look once again into thy bosom with an unprejudiced eye, though thou dost not find the assisting strength thou prayest for, yet hast thou no more self-abasing strength? Perhaps the annoyance thou hast from these remaining distempers in duty, occasion thee to have a meaner opinion of all thy duties than ever, yea, they make thee abhor thyself in the sense of these, as if thou hadst so many loathsome vermin about thee. Job's condition on the dunghill, with all his blotches and running sores on his body, appears desirable to thee in comparison of thine, whose soul thou complainest is worse than his body. O this afflicts thy soul deeply, doth it not? That thou shouldst appear before the Lord with such a dead, divided heart, and do his work worst, that deserves best at thy hands, and is all this nothing? Surely, Christian, thine eyes are held as much as Hagar's, or else thou wouldst see the streamings forth of divine grace in this frame of thy heart; surely others will think God hath done a mighty work in their soul; what harder and more against the hair, than to bring our proud hearts to take shame for that, whereof they naturally boast and glory? And is it nothing for thee to tread on the very neck of thy duties, and count them matter of thy humiliation and abasing, which others make the matter of their confidence and self-rejoicing? Good store of virtue hath gone from Christ, to dry this issue of pride in thy heart, which sometimes in gracious ones runs through and through their duties, so that it is seen, may be, by those that have less grace than themselves.

Second, Christian, candidly interpret God's dealings with thee. Suppose it be as thou sayest, thou hast pleaded the promise, and waited on the means, and yet findest no strength from all these receipts, either in thy grace or comfort, now take heed of charging God foolishly, as if God were not what he promised: this were to give that to satan, which he is all this while gaping for. It is more becoming the dutiful disposition of a child, when he hath not presently what he writes for to his father, to say, My father is wiser than I, his wisdom will prompt him what and when to send to me; and his fatherly affections to me his child will neither suffer him to deny any thing that is good, or slip the time that is seasonable. Christian, thy Heavenly Father hath gracious ends that hold his hands at present, or else thou hadst e'er this heard from him.

First, God may deny further degrees of strength, to put thee on the exercise of that thou hast more carefully. As a mother doth

doth by her child, that is learning to go, she sets it down, and stands some distance from it, and bids it come to her; the child feels its legs weak, and cries for the mother's help, but the mother steps back, on purpose that the child should put forth all its little strength in coming after her. When a poor soul comes and prays against such a sin, God seems to step back and stand at a distance; the temptation increaseth, and no visible succour appears, on purpose that the Christian, though weak, should exercise that strength he hath. Indeed we shall find the sense of a soul's weakness is an especial means to excite it unto a further care and diligence: one that knows his weakness, how prone he is in company to forget himself, in passion how apt is he to fly out, if there be a principle of true grace, this will excite him to be more fearful and watchful, than another that hath obtained greater strength against such temptations. As a child that writes for money to his father, none comes presently, that makes him husband that little he hath the better, not a penny now shall be laid out idly; thus when a Christian hath prayed against such a sin again and again, and yet finds himself weak, prone to be worsted: O how careful will this, should this make such a one of every company, of every occasion? Such a one had not need give his enemy any advantage.

Second, God may deny the Christian such assisting strength in duty, or mortifying strength of corruption, as he desires, purely on a gracious design, that he may thereby have an advantage of expressing his love in such a way as shall most kindly work on the ingenuity of the soul to love God again. Perhaps, Christian, thou prayest for a mercy thou wantest, or for deliverance out of some great affliction, and in the duty thou findest not more assistance than ordinary, yea, many distractions of spirit in it, and misgiving thoughts with unbelieving fears after it: Well, notwithstanding those defects in thy duty, yet God hears thy prayer, and sends in the mercy, on purpose that he may greaten his love in thine eye, and make it more luscious and sweet to thy taste, from his accepting thy weak services, and passing by the distempers of thy spirit. Here is less strength for the duty, that thou mayest have more love in the mercy: nothing will affect a gracious heart more than such a consideration. See it in David, Psal. cxvi. 11, 12. *I said in my haste, all men are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me?* As if David had said, notwithstanding all the comfortable mossages I had from God by his Prophets concerning this matter, my own prayers, and those remarkable providences, which carried in them a partial answer to them, and performance of what was promised, yet I betrayed much unbelief, questioning the truth of the one, and the return of the other: and hath God, notwith-

standing all my infirmities, fulfilled my desire and performed his promise? O what shall I render unto the Lord? Thus David reads God's mercy through the spectacles of his own weakness and infirmity, and it appears great; whereas if a mercy should come in, as an answer to a duty managed with such strength of faith, and height of other graces, as might free him and his duty from usual infirmities, this might prove a snare, and occasion some self-applauding, rather than mercy-admiring thoughts in the creature.

Third, God may communicate the less of his assisting strength, that he may shew the more of his supporting strength, in upholding weak grace: We do not wonder to see a man of strong constitution, that eats his bread heartily and sleeps soundly, live: But for a crazy body, full of ails and infirmities, to be so patched and shored up by the physician's art, that he stands to old age, this begets some wonder in the beholders. It may be thou art a poor trembling soul, thy faith is weak, and thy assaults from satan strong, thy corruptions stirring and active, and thy mortifying strength little, so that in thy opinion they rather gain ground on thy grace, than give ground to it, ever and anon thou art ready to think thou shalt be cast as a wreck on the devil's shore: And yet to this day thy grace lives, though full of leaks; now is it not worth the stepping aside to see this strange sight? A broken ship with masts and hull rent and torn, thus towed along by Almighty Power, through an angry sea, and armadoes of sins and devils, safely into his harbour! To see a poor dilling or rush candle in the face of the boisterous wind, and not blown out! in a word, to see a weak stripling in grace held up in God's arms till he beats the devil craven! This God is doing in upholding thee: Thou art one of those babes, out of whose mouth God is perfecting his praise, by ordaining such strength for thee, that thou a babe in grace shalt yet foil a giant in wrath and power.

Third, If after long waiting for strength from God, it be as thou complainest, enquire whether that which hinders be not found in thyself. The head is the seat of animal spirits, yet there may be such obstructions in the body, that the other members may for a time be deprived of them; till the passage be free between Christ thy head and thee, thy strength will not come, and therefore be willing to enquire:

First, Hast thou come indeed to God for strength to perform duty, to mortify corruption, and the like? Perhaps thou wilt say, Yes, I have waited on those ordinances, which are the way in which he hath promised to give out strength. But is this all? Thou mayest come to them, and not wait on God in them. Hast thou not carnally expected strength from them, and so put the

ordinance,

ordinance, as she her husband, in God's stead? Hath not the frame of thy spirit some affinity with theirs, in James iv. 13. *We will go into such a city, and buy, and sell, and get gain?* Hath not thy heart said, I will go and hear such a man, and get comfort, get strength? and dost thou wonder that thou art weak, barren, and unfruitful? Are ordinances God, that they should make you strong or comfortable? Thou mayest hear them answer thee, poor soul, as the king to the woman in the siege of Samaria: Help, O prayer, sayest thou; or, O! minister. How can they help, except the Lord help? These are but Christ's servants: Christ keeps the key of his wine cellar, they cannot so much as make you drink, when you come to your master's house; and therefore, poor soul, stay not short of Christ, but press through all the croud of ordinances, and ask to speak with Jesus, to see Jesus, and touch him, and virtue will come forth.

Second, Ask thy soul whether thou hast been thankful for that little strength thou hast, though thou art not of that strength in grace to run with the foremost, and hold pace with the tallest of thy brethren, yet art thou thankful that thou hast any strength at all? though it be but to cry after them, whom thou seest outstrip thee in grace. This is worth thy thanks. All in David's army attained not to be equal with his few worthies in prowess and honour, and yet did not cashier themselves: Thou hast reason to be thankful for the meanest place in the army of saints, the least communications of gospel-mercy and grace must not be overlooked. As soon as Moses with his army was through the sea, they strike up, before they stir from the bank side, and acknowledge the wonderful appearance of God's power and mercy for them, though this was but one step in their way; a howling wilderness presented itself to them, and they not able to subsist a few days with all their provision, for all their great victory; yet Moses, he will praise God for this handful of mercy. This holy man knew the only way to keep credit with God, so as to have more, was to keep touch, and pay down his praise for what was received. If thou wouldst have fuller communications of divine strength, own God in what he hath done. Art thou weak? Bless God thou hast life. Dost thou through feebleness often fail in duty, and fall into temptation? Mourn in the sense of these; yet bless God, that thou dost not live in a total neglect of duty, out of a prophane contempt thereof, and that instead of falling through weakness, thou dost not lie in the mire of sin through the wickedness of thy heart. The unthankful soul may thank itself, it thrives no better.

Thirdly, Art thou humble under the assistance and strength God hath given thee? Pride stops the conduit: if the heart begins to swell, it is time for God to hold his hand, and to turn the

cock; for all that is poured on such a soul runs over into self-applauding, and so is as water spilt, in regard of any good it doth the creature, or any glory it brings to God. A proud heart and a lofty mountain are never fruitful. Now beside the common ways that pride discovers itself, as by under-valuing others, and over-valuing itself and such like, you shall observe two other symptoms of it. First, it appears in bold adventures, when a person runs into the mouth of temptation, bearing himself on his confidence of the grace received. This was Peter's sin, by which he was drawn to engage further than became an humble faith, running into the devil's quarters, and so became his prisoner for a while. The good man, when in his right temper, had thoughts low enough of himself; as when he asked his master, *Is it I?* But he that feared at one time, lest he might be the traitor, at another cannot think so ill of himself, as to suspect he should be the denier of his master. What, he? No, tho' all the rest forsake him, yet he would stand to his colours. Is this thy case, Christian? Possibly God hath given thee much of his mind, thou art skilful in the word of life, and therefore thou darest venture to breathe in corrupt air, as if only the weak spirits of less knowing Christians exposed them to be infected with the contagion of error and heresy. Thou hast a large portion of grace, or at least thou thinkest so, and venturest to go where an humble-minded Christian would fear his heels should slip from under him. Truly now thou temptest God to suffer thy locks to be cut, when thou art so bold to lay thy head in the lap of temptation. Secondly, Pride appears in the neglect of those means, whereby the saints graces and comforts are to be fed when strongest. May be, Christian, when thou art under fears and doubts, then God hath thy company, thou art oft with thy pitcher at his door; but when thou hast got any measure of peace, there goes presently some strangeness between God and thee: Thy pitcher walks not, as it was wont, to these wells of salvation. No wonder if thou (tho' rich in grace and comfort) goest behind-hand, seeing thou spendest away the old stock, and drivest no trade at present to bring in more: or if thou dost not thus neglect duty, yet may be thou dost not perform it with that humility, which formerly beautified the same: Then thou prayedst in the sense of thy weakness to get strength, now thou prayest to shew thy strength that others may admire thee. And if once (like Hezekiah) we call in spectators to see our treasure, and applaud us for our gifts and comfort, then it is high time for God, if he indeed love us, to send some messengers to carry these away from us, which carry our hearts from him.

Fourthly, If thy heart doth not smite thee from what hath been said, but thou hast sincerely waited on God, and hast not received

ceived the strength thou desirest, yet let it be thy resolution to live and die waiting on him. God doth not tell us his time of coming, and it were boldness to set one, of our own heads. Go, saith Christ to his disciples, Luke xxiv. 49. *Stay ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.* Thus he saith to thee; stay at Jerusalem, wait on him in the means he hath appointed, till thou art endued with further power to mortify thy corruptions, &c. And for thy comfort know,

1. Thy thus persevering to wait on God, will be an evidence of strong grace in thee: the less encouragement thou hast to duty, the more thy faith and obedience to bear thee up in duty. He that can trade when times are so dead, that all his wares lie upon his hand, and yet draws not in his hand, but rather trades more and more, sure his stock is great. What, no comfort in hearing, no ease to thy spirit in praying, and yet more greedy to hear, and more frequent in prayer? O soul, great is thy faith and patience.

2. Assure thyself when thou art at the greatest pinch, strength shall come: *They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength:* when the last *handful of meal was dressing*, then is the prophet sent to keep the widow's house. When temptation is strong, thy little strength even spent, and thou ready to yield into the hands of thine enemies, then expect succours from heaven to enable thee to hold out under the temptation: Thus to Paul, *my grace is sufficient*, or power from heaven to raise the siege, and drive away the tempter; thus to Job, when satan had him at an advantage, then God takes him off. Like a wise moderator, when the respondent is hard put to it by a subtle opponent, takes him off, when he would else run him down, James v. 11. *Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.*

EPHES. VI. 11.

Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil.

THIS verse is a key to the former, wherein the apostle had exhorted believers to encourage, and bear up their fainting spirits on the Lord, and the power of his might. Now in these words he explains himself, and shows how he would have them do this; not presumptuously come into the field without that armour, which God hath appointed to be worn by all his soldiers, and yet with a bravado to trust in the power of God to save them.

That

That soul is sure to fall short of home (heaven I mean) who hath nothing but a carnal confidence on the name of God, blown up by the ignorance of God and himself: No, he that would have his confidence duly placed on the power of God, must conscientiously use the means appointed for his defence, and not rush naked into the battle, like that fanatic spirit at Munster, who would needs go forth, and chase away the whole army, then besieging that city, with no other cannon than a few words charged with the name of the Lord of hosts (which he blasphemously made bold to use) saying, *In the name of the Lord of Hosts, depart.* But himself soon perished, to learn others wisdom by what he paid for his folly. What foolish braving language shall you hear drop from the most prophane and ignorant among us? They trust in God, hope in his mercy, defy the devil and all his works, and such stuff, who yet are poor naked creatures, without the least piece of God's armour upon their souls. To cashier such presumption from the saints camp, he annexed this directory to his exhortation, *Put on the whole Armour of God, &c.* So that the words fall into these two general parts.

First, A direction annexed to the former exhortation, shewing how we may in a regular way come to be strong in the Lord, that is, by putting on the whole armour of God.

Second, A reason or argument strengthening this direction, *that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* In the direction observe,

First, The furniture he directs, and that is, *Armour.*

Second, The kind or quality of this armour, *Armour of God.*

Third, The quantity or entireness of the armour, *The whole armour of God.*

Fourth, The use of this armour; *Put on the whole armour of God.*

To begin with the first, The furniture which every one must get that would fight Christ's battles: the question here will be, what is this armour?

First, By armour is meant Christ; we read of putting on the Lord Jesus, Rom. xiii. 14. where Christ is set forth under the notion of armour. The apostle doth not exhort them, for rioting and drunkenness, to put on sobriety and temperance; for chambering and wantonness, put on chastity (as the Philosopher would have done); but bids put on the Lord Jesus Christ; implying thus much, Till Christ be put on, the creature is unarmed. It is not a man's morality and philosophical virtues that will repel a temptation, sent with a full charge from satan's cannon, though possibly it may be the pistol shot of some less solicitation; so that he is the man in armour, that is in Christ. Again, the graces of Christ, these are armour, as the girdle of truth, the breast-

breast-plate of righteousness, and the rest. Hence we are bid also *put on the new man*, Eph. iv. 24. which is made up of all the several graces, as its parts and members. And he is the unarmed soul, that is the unregenerate soul. Not excluding those duties and means which God hath appointed the Christian to use for his defence.

The phrase thus opened; the point is,

CHAP. I.

Shewing the Christless and Graceless Soul, to be the Soul without Armour, and therein his Misery.

Observ. THAT a person in a christless, graceless state, is naked and unarmed, and so unfit to fight Christ's battles against sin and satan. Or thus, a soul out of Christ is naked, and destitute of all armour to defend them against sin and satan. God at first sent man forth in complete armour, *being created in righteousness and true holiness;* but by a wile the devil stripped him, and therefore as soon as the first sin was completed, it is written, Gen. iii. 7. *They were naked*, that is, poor weak creatures, at the will of satan, a subdued people, disarmed by their proud conqueror, and unable to make head against him. Indeed it cost satan some dispute to make the first breach, but after that he had once the gates opened to let him in as conqueror into the heart of man, he plays *rex:* Behold a troop of other sins crowd in after him, without any stroke or strife; instead of confessing their sins, they run their head in a bush, and by their good will would not come where God is, and when they cannot flee from him, how do they prevaricate before him? They peal one of another, shifting the sin, rather than suing for mercy. So quickly were their hearts hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And this is the woeful condition of every son and daughter of Adam: naked he finds us, and slaves makes us, till God by his effectual call delivers us from the power of satan into the kingdom of his dear Son: which will further appear, if we consider this christless state in a four-fold notion.

First, It is a state of alienation from God. *Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenant of promise*, Eph. ii. 12. Such a one hath no more to do with any covenant promise, than he that lives at Rome has to do with the charter of London, which is the birth-right of its own denisons, not strangers. He is without God in the world, he can claim no more protection from God than an outlawed subject from his prince. If any mischief befals him, the

mends

mends is in his own hands, whereas God hath his hedge of special providence about his saints; and the devil, though his spite be most at them, dares not come upon God's ground to touch any of them, without particular leave. Now what a deplored condition is that, wherein a soul is left to the wide world, in the midst of legions of lusts and devils, to be rent and torn like a silly hare among a pack of hounds, and no God to call them off! Let God leave a people, though never so warlike, presently they lose their wits, cannot find their hands: a company of children or wounded men may rise up, and chase them out of their fenced cities, because God is not with them; which made Caleb and Joshua pacify the mutinous Israelites at the tidings of giants and walled cities, with this; *They are bread for us, their defence is departed from them.* How much more must that soul be as bread to satan, that hath no defence from the Almighty? Take men of the greatest parts, natural or acquired accomplishments, who only want an union with Christ, and renewing grace from Christ: O what fools doth the devil make of them, leading them at his pleasure, some to one lust, some to another; the proudest of them all is slave to one or other, though it be to the ruining of body and soul for ever! Where lies the mystery, that men of such parts and wisdom should debase themselves to such drudgery work of hell? Even here, they are in a state of alienation from God, and no more able of themselves to break the devil's prison, than a slave to run from his chain.

Second, The christless state is a state of ignorance, and such must needs be naked and unarmed. He that cannot see his enemy, how can he ward off the blow he sends? One seeing prophet leads a whole army of blind men whither he pleaseth. The imperfect knowledge saints have here, is satan's advantage against them; he often takes them on the blind side: how easily then may he, with a parcel of good words, carry the blind soul out of his way, who knows not a step of the right? Now, that the christless state is a state of ignorance, see Eph. v. 8. *Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.* Ye were darkness, not in the dark, as one that hath an eye may be. A child of light is often in the dark, concerning some truth or promise, but then hath a spiritual eye, which the christless person wants, and so is darkness. And this darkness cannot be enlightened, but by its union with Christ, which is expressed in the following phrase, *But now are ye light in the Lord.* As the eye of the body, once put out, can never be restored by the creature's art, so neither can the spiritual eye, lost by Adam's sin, be restored by the teaching of men and angels. It is one of the diseases which Christ came to cure, Luke iv. 18. 'Tis true, there is a light of reason, which is imparted to every man by nature; but

but this light is darkness, compared with the saints; as the night is dark to the day, even when the moon is in its full glory. The night-light of reason may save a person from some ditch, or pond, great and broad sins, but it will never help him to escape the more secret corruptions, which the saints see like atoms in the beams of spiritual knowledge. There is such curious work the creature is to do, which cannot be wrought by candle-light of natural knowledge. Nay more, where the common illumination of the spirit is superadded to this light of nature, yet that is darkness compared with the sanctifying knowledge of a renewed soul, which doth both discover spiritual truths, and warm the heart at the same time with the love of truth, having like the sun a prolifical and quickening virtue, which the other wants: so that the heart lies, under such common illuminations, cold and dead. He hath no more strength to resist satan, than if he knew not the command; whereas the Christian knowledge, even when taken prisoner by a temptation, pursues and brings back the soul, as Abraham his nephew, out of the enemies hands: which hints the third.

Third, The christless state is a state of impotency, Rom. v. *When we were without strength, Christ came to die for the ungodly.* What can a disarmed people, not having sword or gun, do to shake off the yoke of a conquering enemy? Such a power hath satan over the soul, Luke xi. 21. He is called the strong man that keeps the soul as his palace: If he hath no disturbance from heaven, he need fear no mutiny within; he keeps all in peace there. What the spirit of God doth in a saint, that in a manner doth satan in a sinner. The spirit fills the heart of the saint with love, joy, holy desires, fears; so satan fills the sinner's heart with pride, lust, lying: *Why hath satan filled thy heart?* saith Peter. And thus filled with satan (as the drunkard with wine), he is not his own man, but satan's slave.

Fourth, The state of unregeneracy is a state of friendship with sin and satan. If it be enmity against God (as it is), then friendship with satan. Now it will be hard to make that soul fight in earnest against his friend. Is satan divided? Will the devil within, fight against the devil without? Satan in the heart, shut out satan at the door? Sometimes indeed there appears a scuffle between satan and a carnal heart; but it is a mere cheat, like the fighting of two fencers on a stage: You would think at first they were in earnest, but observing how wary they are where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not mean to kill: and that which puts all out of doubt, when the prize is done, you shall see them making merry together, with what they have got of their spectators, which was all they fought for: when a carnal heart makes the greatest bustle against sin, by complaining of it,

or praying against it, follow him but off the stage of duty (where he had gained the reputation of a saint, the prize he fights for,) and you shall see them sit as friendly together in a corner as ever.

Use 1. First, This takes the wonder off satan's great conquests in the world: when you look abroad, and see his vast empire, and what a little spot of ground contains Christ's subjects, what heaps of precious souls lie prostrate under this foot of pride, and what a little regiment of saints march under Christ's banner: perhaps the strangeness of the thing may make you ask, Is hell stronger than heaven? The arms of satan more victorious than the cross of Christ? No such matter; consider but this one thing, and you will wonder that Christ hath any to follow him, rather than that he hath so few. Satan finds the world unarmed; when the Prince of the World comes, he finds nothing to oppose, the whole soul is in a disposition to yield at the first summons; and if conscience, governor for God in the creature, stands out a-while, all the other powers, as will and affections, are in a discontent, (like mutinous soldiers in a garrison) who never rest till they have brought over conscience to yield, or, against its command, set open the city gate to the enemy, and so deliver traitorously their conscience prisoner to their lusts. But when Christ comes to demand the soul, he meets a scornful answer, *Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of the Most High. We will not have this man to reign over us.* With one consent they vote against him, and rise up as the Philistines against Samson, whom they called *the destroyer of the country. Ye will not come unto me*, saith Christ. O how true are poor sinners to the devil's trust! They will not deliver the castle they hold for satan, till fired over their heads. Pharaoh opposeth Moses on one hand, and Israel cry out upon him on the other. Such measures hath Christ both at satan's hand, and the sinner's. That which lessened Alexander's conquests was, he overcame a people buried in barbarism, without arms, or discipline of war; and that which heightened Cæsar's (though not so many), he overcame a people more warlike and furnished. Satan's victories are of poor, ignorant, graceless souls, who have neither arms, nor hands, nor hearts to oppose; but when he assaults a saint, then he sits down before a city with gates and bars, and ever riseth with shame; unable to take the weakest hold, to pluck the weakest saint out of Christ's hands; but Christ brings souls out of his dominions with a high hand, in spite of all the force and fury of hell, which like Pharaoh and his host pursue them.

Secondly, This gives us a reason why the devil hath so great a spite against the gospel. Why? because this opens a magazine of arms and furniture for the soul; the word is that *Tower of David*, Cant. iv. 4. *built for an armoury, wherein there hang a thousand*

thousand bucklers, all the shields of mighty men. Hence the saints have ever had their armour, and the preaching of the gospel unlocks it. As gospel-light ascends, so satan's shady kingdom of darkness vanisheth, Rev. xiv. 16. There one angel comes forth to preach the everlasting gospel; and another angel follows at his back, ver. 8. crying *Victoria, Babylon is fallen, is fallen.* The very first charge the gospel gave to the kingdom of darkness, shook the foundations thereof, and put the legions of hell to the run. The seventy, whom Christ sent out, bring this speedy account of their embassage: Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name; and Christ answers, I beheld satan as lightning fall from heaven. As if he had said, 'Tis no news you tell me, I beheld satan fall when I sent you; I knew the gospel would make work where it came; and therefore no wonder satan labours to dispossess the gospel, which dispossesseth him; he knows that army is near lost, whose magazine is blown up: 'Tis true indeed, under the very gospel the devil rageth more in such swinish sinners, as are given over of God to be possessed of that fiend, for rejecting of his grace; but he is cast out of others, who before the loving kindness of God to man appeared in the gospel, were commanded by him, serving divers lusts and pleasures; but now by the light of the gospel they see their folly, and, by the grace it brings, are enabled to renounce him. This, this, is that which torments the foul spirit, to see himself forsaken of his old friends and servants, and this new Lord to come and take his subjects from him: and therefore he labours either by persecution to drive the gospel away, or by policy to persuade a people to send it away from their coasts: and was he ever more likely to effect it among us? What a low esteem hath he brought the preaching of the gospel unto? The price is fallen half in half to what it was some years past, even among those that have been counted the greatest merchants upon the saints exchange. Some, that have thought it worth crossing the seas, even to the Indies (almost as far as others fetch their gold), to enjoy the gospel, are loth now to cross the street to hear it at so cheap a rate; and some that come (who formerly trembled at it), make it most of their errand to mock at it, or quarrel with it. Nay, it is come to such a pass, that the word is so heavy a charge to the squeamish stomachs of many professors, that it comes up again presently, and abundance of choler with it, against the preacher, especially if it fall foul of the sins and errors of the times, the very naming of which is enough to offend, though the nation be sinking under the weight. What reproaches are the faithful ministers of the gospel laden withal? I call heaven and earth to witness, whether they suffered a hotter persecution of the tongue, than in this apostatizing age. A new generation of professors are started up, that will not know them to be the ministers of Christ, though those before them (as well

well in grace, as in time, more able to derive their spiritual pedigree than themselves) have to their death owned them for their spiritual fathers. And must not the ark needs shake, when they that carry it are thus struck at, both in their persons and office? What are these men doing? Alas, they know not, *Father, forgive them;* they are cutting off their right hand with their left; they are making themselves and the nation naked, by despising the gospel, and those that bring it.

Use 3. Consider your deplored estate, who are wholly naked and unarmed. Can you pity the beggar at your door (when you see such in a winter day, shivering, with a naked back exposed to the fury of the cold), and not pity your own far more dismal soul-nakedness, by which thou liest open to heaven's wrath, and hell's malice? Shall their nakedness cover them with shame, fill them with fear of perishing, which makes them with pitiful moans knock and cry for relief, as it is reported of Russia, where their poor (through extreme necessity) have this desperate manner of begging in the streets; *Give me and cut me, give me and kill me?* And canst thou let satan come and cut thy throat in thy bed of sloth, rather than accept of clothes to cover, yea, armour to defend thee? (I mean Christ and his grace, which in the gospel is tendered to you.) And do not lightly believe your flattering hearts, if they shall tell you are provided of these already. I am afraid many a gaudy professor will be found as naked in regard of Christ, and truth of grace, as drunkards and swearers themselves: Such there are, who content themselves with a Christ in profession, in gifts, and in duties, but seek not a Christ in solid grace, and so perish; those indeed are an ornament to the Christian, as the scarf and feather to the soldier, but these quench not the bullet in battle; 'tis Christ and his grace doth that, therefore labour to be sound rather than brave Christians. Grace embellished with gifts is the more beautiful; but these, without grace, only the richer spoil for satan.

The second branch of the first general part of the words follows; and that is, the quality or kind of that armour which the Christian is here directed to provide. It is not any trash will serve the turn; better none than not armour of proof; and none such, but armour of God. In a twofold respect, it must be of God. First, In institution and appointment. Secondly, In constitution.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Sheweth, that the Armour we use against Satan must be divine in the Institution, such only as God appoints.

Observ. FIRST, the Christian's armour which he wears, must be of divine institution and appointment. The soldier comes into the field with no arms, but what his general commands; 'tis not left to every one's fancy to bring what weapons he please, this will breed confusion. The Christian soldier is bound up to God's order; though the army be on earth, yet the council of war sits in heaven; this duty ye shall do, that means ye shall use; and to do more, or use other than God commands, though with some seeming success against sin, such shall surely be called to an account for this boldness. The discipline of war among men is strict in this case. Some have suffered death by a council of war, even when they have beaten the enemy, because out of their place, or beside their order. God is very precise in this point; he will say to such as invent ways to worship him of their own, and coin means to mortify corruption, obtain comfort in their own mint, *Who hath required this at your hands?* This is truly to be *righteous over-much* (as Solomon speaks), when we will pretend to correct God's law, and add supplements of our own to his rule. Who will pay that man his wages, that is not set on work by God? God tells Israel, the false prophets shall do them no good, because they come not of his errand, Jer. xxiii. 22. So neither will those ways and means help, which are not of God's appointing; God's thoughts are not as man's, nor his ways as ours, which he useth to attain his ends by. If man had been to set forth the Israelitish army, now to march out of Egypt; surely his wisdom would have directed rather to have plundered the Egyptians of their horses and arms, (as more necessary for such an expedition) than to borrow their jewels and ear-rings: but God will have them come out naked and on foot; and Moses keeps close to his order; yea, when horses were taken in battle, because God commanded they should be houghed, they obeyed, though to their seeming disadvantage. It was God's war they waged, and therefore but reasonable they should be under his command: they encamped and marched by his order; as the ark moved and rested, they fought by his command, the number appointed by him, the means and weapons they should use, all prescribed by God, as in the assault of Jericho: and what is the gospel of all this? (for surely God hath an eye in that to our marching to heaven, and our fighting with these cursed spirits and lusts that stand in our way) but that we should fight lawfully, using those means, which we have from his mouth in his word.

This reproveth two sorts.

1. First, Those that fight satan in armour that hath no divine institution, as,

First, The Papist. Look into his armoury, and hardly a piece that will be found armour of God. They fight in the Pope's armour; his authority is the shop wherein their weapons are forged; it were a kind of penance to your patience, to repeat all the several pieces of armour, with which they load silly souls, too heavy indeed for the broadest shoulders among them to bear; yea, more than the wiser sort of them mean to use: their masses, matins, vigils, pilgrimages, lent-fasts, whippings, vows of chastity, poverty, with a world of such trash; where is a word of God for these? Who hath required these things at their hands? A thousand woes will one day fall upon those impostors, who have stripped the people of the true armour of God, and put these reeds and bulrushes in their hands. This may justify us in the sight of God and men, for our departure from them, who will force us to venture the life of our souls in such paper armour, when God hath provided better.

Secondly, The carnal Protestant, who fights in fleshly armour, 2 Cor. x. 3. The Apostle speaks there of *warring after the flesh*, that is, with weapons or means, which man's carnal wisdom prompts to, and not God's commands, and so are weak. How few are clad with other in the day of battle? First, when satan tempts to sin, if he hath not presently a peaceable entrance, yet the resistance commonly made is carnal; the strength carnal they rest on; their own, not God's; the motives carnal, as the fear of man more than of God. Where one saith, How shall I do this, and anger man, displease my master, provoke my parents, and lose the good opinion of my minister? Herod feared John, and did many things; had he feared God, he would have laboured to have done every thing. The like may be said of all other motives, which have their spring in the creature, not in God; they are armour which will not out-stand shot. If thy strength lie in a creature-lock, it may be soon cut off; if in God, it will hold, as his command; *it is written:* I cannot do it, but I must set my foot on the law of my Maker. Or the love of Christ; I cannot come at my lust, but I must go over my bleeding Saviour; and therefore away, soul tempter, I hate thee and thy motion. This foundation is rock, and will stand; but if it be some carnal respect that balanceth thee, another more weighty may be found of the same kind, which will cast the scales another way. She that likes not the man because of his dress only, may soon be gained when he comes in another habit. Satan can change his suit, and then thy mouth will be stopped when thy carnal argument is taken off.—Secondly, when the word or conscience rebuke for sin, what is the

armour

armour that men commonly cover their guilty souls withal? Truly no other than carnal. If they cannot evade the charge that these bring, then they labour to mitigate it, by extenuating the fact. 'Tis true, will they say, I did (I confess) commit such a fault, but I was drawn in: *The woman gave me, and I did eat,* was Adam's fig-leaf armour; 'twas but once or twice, and I hope that breaks no such squares, was this such a great business? I know jolly Christians will do as much as this comes to; I thank God, I cannot be charged for whore or thief: This is the armour which must keep off the blow. But if conscience will not be thus taken off, then they labour to divert their thoughts, by striking up the loud music of carnal delights, that the noise of one may drown the other; or with Cain, they will go from the presence of the Lord, and come no more at those ordinances which make their head ache, and hinder the rest of their raving consciences. If yet the ghost haunts them, then they labour to pacify it with some good work or other, which they set against their bad; their alms and charity in their old age, must expiate the oppression and violence of their former days; as if this little frankincense were enough to air and take away the plague of God's curse, which is on their ill-gotten goods. Thus poor creatures catch at any sorry covering, which will not so much as hide their shame, much less choke the bullet of God's wrath, when God shall fire upon them; this must be the armour of God's appointing. Adam was naked for all his fig-leaves, while God *taught him to make coats of skin,* Gen. iii. 21. covertly (as some think) shadowing out Christ the true *Lamb of God,* whose righteousness alone was appointed by him to cover our shame, and arm our naked souls from the sight and stroke of his justice.

2. Secondly, It reproves those who use the armour of God, but not as God hath appointed, which appears in three sorts:

First, When a person useth a duty appointed by God, not as armour of defence against sin, but as a cover for sin. Who would think him an enemy that wears Christ's colours in his hat, and marcheth after Christ in the exercise of all the duties of his worship? Such a one may pass all the courts of guard, without so much as being bid stand; all take him for a friend; and yet some such there are, who are fighting against Christ all the while. The hypocrite is the man, he learns his postures, gets the word, has his tongue tipt with scripture language, and walks in the habit of a Christian, merely on a design to drive his trade the more closely; like some highwaymen in our days, who rob in the habit of soldiers, that they may be the less suspected. This is desperate wickedness indeed, to take up God's arms, and use them in the devil's service; of all sinners such shall find the least mercy; false friends shall speed worse than open enemies.

Secondly, They use not the armour of God, as God hath appointed, who put a carnal confidence therein. We must not confide in the armour of God, but in the God of this armour, because all *our weapons are only mighty through God*, 2 Cor. x. The ark was the means of the Jews safety, but, carnally applauded and gloried in, hastened their overthrow: So duties and ordinances, gifts and graces, in their place, are means for the soul's defence; satan trembles, as much as the Philistines at the ark, to see a soul diligent in the use of duty, and exercise of grace; but when the creature confides in them, this is dangerous. As some, when they have prayed, think they please God for all day, though they take little heed to their steps. Others have so good an opinion of their faith, sincerity, knowledge, that you may as soon make them believe they are dogs, as that they may ever be taken in such an error or sinful practice. Others, when assisted in duty, are prone to stroke their own head with a *Bene fecisti, Bernarde*, and so promise themselves to speed, because they have done their errand so well. What speak such passages in the hearts of men, but a carnal confidence in their armour, to their ruin? Many souls, we may safely say, do not only perish praying, repenting, and believing after a sort, but they perish by praying and repenting, &c. while they carnally trust in these. As it falls out sometimes, that the soldier in battle loseth his life by means of his own armour, it is so heavy he cannot flee with it, and so close buckled to him, that he cannot get it off, to flee for his life without it. If we be saved, we must come naked to Christ, for all our duties; we will not fly to Christ while confiding in them; and some are so locked into them, that they cannot come without them, and so in a day of temptation are trampled under the feet of God's wrath, and satan's fury. The poor publican throws down his arms, (that is, all confidence in himself) cries out for quarter at the hands of mercy; *God be merciful unto me a sinner*, and he comes off with his life, he went away justified; but the Pharisee, loaden with his righteousness, and conceited of it, stands to it, and is lost.

Thirdly, They do not use the armour of God as such, who, in the performing of divine duties, eye not God through them, and this makes them all weak and ineffectual. Then the word is mighty, when read as the word of God; then the gospel preached, powerful to convince the conscience, and revive the drooping spirit, when heard as the appointment of the great God, and not the exercise of a mean creature. Now it will appear in three things, whether we eye divine appointment in the means.

First, When we engage in a duty, and look not up to God for his blessing. Didst thou eye God's appointment in the means, thou wouldst say, Soul, if there come any good of thy present service, it must drop from heaven, for it is God's appointment, not man's:

man's: and can I profit whether God will or no? Or think to find and bring away any soul-enriching treasure from his ordinance without his leave? Had I not best look up to him, by whose blessing I live more than by my bread?

Again, Secondly, It appears we look not at God's appointment, when we have low thoughts of the means. What is Jordan that I should wash in it? What is the preaching that I should attend on it, where I hear nothing but what I knew before? What are these beggarly elements of water, and bread, and wine? Are not these the reasonings of a soul that forgets who appoints these? Didst thou remember who commands, thou wouldst not question what the command is. What though it be clay, let Christ use it, and it shall open the eyes, though in itself more like to put them out. Hadst thou thy eye on God, thou wouldst silence thy carnal reason with this: 'Tis God sends me to such a duty; whatever he saith unto me, I will do it, though he should send me (as Christ them) to draw wine out of the pots filled with water.

Thirdly, When a soul leaves off a duty, because he hath not in it what he expected from it. O! saith the soul, I see it is in vain to follow the means as I have done: still satan foils me: I will even give over. Dost thou remember, soul, 'tis God's appointment? Surely then thou wouldst persevere in the midst of discouragement. He that bids thee pray, bids thee pray without ceasing. He that bids thee hear, bids thee wait at the posts of wisdom. Thou shouldst reason thus: God hath set me on duty, and here I will stand, till God takes me off, and bids me leave praying.

CHAP. III.

Sheweth, that the Armour we use for our Defence against Satan, must not only be divine by Institution, but Constitution also.

SECONDLY, the Christian's armour must be armour of God, in regard of its make and constitution. My meaning is, 'tis not only God that must appoint the weapons and arms the Christian useth for his defence, but he must also be the efficient of them; he must work all their work in them and for them. Prayer is an appointment of God, yet this is not armour of proof, except it be a prayer of God flowing from his spirit. Hope, that is the helmet the saint by command is to wear; but this hope must be God's creature, *who hath begotten us to a lively hope*, Jude xx. Faith, that is another principal piece in the Christian's furniture; but it must be *the faith of God's elect*, 1 Pet. i. 3. Tit. i. 1. He is to take righteousness and holiness for his breast-plate; but it

must be *true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. *Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.* Thus, you see, it is not armour as armour, but as armour of God, that makes the soul impregnable. *That which is born of God overcometh the world:* a faith born of God, a hope born of God: but the spurious adulterous brood of duties and graces, being begot of mortal seed, cannot be immortal.

Must the soul's armour be of God's make? Be exhorted then to look narrowly, whether the armour ye wear be the workmanship of God or no. There is abundance of false ware put off now a-days; little good armour worn by the multitude of professors; 'tis satan's after-game he plays, if he cannot please the sinner with his naked state of prophaneness, then to put him off with something like grace, some slighty stuff that shall neither do him good nor satan hurt; thus many, like children, that cry for a knife or dagger, and are pleased as well with a bone knife and wooden dagger, as with the best of all; so they have some armour, it matters not what. Pray they must, but little care how it be performed: Believe in God! Yes, they hope they are not infidels: but what that belief is, how they came by it, or whether it will hold in an evil day, this never was put to the question in their hearts. Thus thousands perish with a vain conceit: they think they are armed against satan, death, and judgment, when they are *miserable and naked:* yea, worse on it than those who are more naked, (those I mean) who have not a rag of civility to hide their shame from the world's eye; and that in a double respect.

First, It is harder to work on such a soul savingly, because he hath a form, though not the power, and this affords him a plea. A soul purely naked, nothing like the wedding garment on, he is speechless: the drunkard hath nothing to say for himself, when you ask him why he lives so swinishly; you may come up to him, and get within him, and turn the very mouth of his conscience upon him, which will shoot conviction into him: But to come to deal with one that prays and hears, one that is a pretender to hope and faith in God, here is a man in glistering armour, he hath his weapon in his hand, with which he will keep the preacher, and the word he chargeth him with, at arm's length. Who can say, I am not a saint? What duty do I neglect? Here is a breastwork he lies under, which makes him not so fair a mark either to the observation or reproof of another, his chief defect being within, where man's eye comes not. Again, it is harder to work on him, because he hath been tampered with already, and miscarried in the essay. How comes such a one to be acquainted with such duties, to make such a profession? Was it ever thus? No: the word hath been at work upon him, his conscience hath scared him from his trade of wickedness into a form of profession; but

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taking in short of Christ, for want of a thorough change, it is harder to remove him than the other: he is like a lock whose wards have been troubled, which makes it harder to turn the key, than if never pottered with. It is better dealing with a wild ragged colt, never backed, than one that in breaking hath taken a wrong stroke: a bone quite out of joint, than false set. In a word, such a one hath more to deny than a prophane person: the one hath but his lusts, his whores, his swill and draught; but the other hath his duties, his seeming graces. O how hard it is to persuade such a one to light, and hold Christ's stirrup, while he and his duties are made Christ's footstool!

Secondly, Such a one is deepest in condemnation. None sink so far into hell as those that come nearest heaven, because they fall from the greatest height. As it aggravates the torments of damned souls in this respect above devils, they had a cord of mercy thrown out to them, which devils had not; so by how much God by his spirit waits on, pleads with, and by both gains on a soul more than others, by so much such a one (if he perish) will find hell the hotter; these add to his sin, and the remembrance of his sin in hell thus accented, will add to his torment. None will have such a sad parting from Christ, as those who went half the way with him, and then left him. Therefore (I beseech you) look to your armour. David would not fight in armour he had not tried, though it was a king's; perhaps some thought him too nice. What, is not the king's armour good enough for David? Thus many will say, Art thou so curious and so precise? Such a great man doth thus and thus, and hopes to come to heaven at last, and darest thou not venture thy soul in his armour? No, Christian, follow not the example of the greatest on earth; 'tis thy own soul thou venturest in battle, therefore thou canst not be too choice of thy armour. Bring thy heart to the word, as the only touch-stone of thy grace and furniture; the word (I told you) is *the tower of David,* from whence thy armour must be fetched; if thou canst find this tower-stamp on it, then it is of God, else not. Try it therefore by this one scripture-stamp. Those weapons are mighty, which God gives his saints to fight his battles withal, 2 Cor. x. 4. *The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God.* The sword of the spirit hath its point and edge, whereby it makes its way into his heart and conscience, through the impenitency of the one, and stupidity of the other, (wherein satan, as with buff and coat of mail, arms the sinner against God) and there cuts and slashes, kills and mortifies lust in its own castle, where satan thinks himself impregnable. The breast-plate, which is of God, doth not bend and break at every dart of temptation, but it is of such a divine temperament, that it repels satan's motions with scorn on satan's teeth. Should such

a one as I sin? as Nehemiah in another case; and such are all the rest. Now try whether your weapons be mighty or weak; what can you do or suffer more for God, than an hypocrite that is clad in fleshly armour? I will tell you what the world saith, and if you be Christians, clear yourselves, and wipe off that dirt which they throw upon your glistering armour; they say, These professors indeed have God more in their talk than we, they are oftener in the mount of duty than we, but when they come down into their shops, relations or worldly employments, then the best of them all is but like one of us; they can throw the tables of God's commandments out of their hands as well as we, come from a sermon, and be as covetous and griping, as peevish and passionate as the worst; they shew as little love to Christ as others; when it is matter of cost, as to relieve a poor saint, or maintain the gospel, you may get more from a stranger, an enemy, than from a professing brother. O Christians, either vindicate the name of Christ, whose ensign you seem to march after, or throw away your seeming armour, by which you have drawn the eyes of the world upon you. If you will not, Christ himself will cashier you, and that with shame enough 'ere long. Never call that armour of God, which defends thee not against the power of satan. Take therefore the several pieces of your armour, and try them, as a soldier before he fights will set his helmet, or headpiece, as a mark, at which he lets fly a brace of bullets, and as he finds them, so will wear them or leave them; but be sure thou shootest scripture bullets. Thou boastest a breast-plate of righteousness: ask thy soul, didst thou ever in thy life perform a duty to please God, and not to accommodate thyself? thou hast prayed often against thy sin, a great noise of these pieces have been heard coming from thee by others, as if there were some hot fight between thee and thy corruption, but canst thou indeed shew one sin that thou hast slain by all thy praying? Joseph was alive, though his coat was brought bloody to Jacob; and so may thy sin be, for all thy mortified look in duty, and outcry thou makest against them. If thou wouldst thus try every piece, thy credulous heart would not so easily be cheated with satan's false ware.

Object. But is all armour that is of God thus mighty? We read of weak grace, little faith: how can this then be a trial of our armour, whether of God or not?

Ans. I answer, The weakness of grace is in respect of stronger grace, but that weak grace is strong and mighty in comparison of counterfeit grace: Now I do not bid thee try the truth of thy grace by such a power as is peculiar to stronger grace, but by that power which will distinguish it from false; true grace, when weakest, is stronger than false, when strongest. There is a principle of divine life in it, which the other hath not: Now life, as

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it gives excellency, (a flea or fly, by reason of its life, is more excellent than the sun in all his glory) so it gives strength. The slow motion of a living man (though so feeble that he cannot go a furlong in a day), yet, coming from life, imports more strength than is in a ship, which (though it sails swiftly) hath its motion from without: Thus possibly an hypocrite may exceed the true Christian in the bulk and outside of a duty, yet because his strength is not from life, but from some wind and tide abroad that carries him, and the Christian's is from an inward principle; therefore the Christian's weakness is stronger than the hypocrite in his greatest enlargements. I shall name but two acts of grace when weakest, whereby the Christian exceeds the hypocrite in all his best array. You will say, Then grace is at a weak stay indeed, when the Christian is persuaded to commit a sin, a great sin, such a one as possibly a carnal person would not have it said of him for a great matter, so low may the tide of grace fall; yet true grace, at such an ebb, will appear of greater strength and force than the other.

First, This principle of grace will never leave, till the soul weeps bitterly, with Peter, that it hath offended so good a God. Speak, O ye hypocrites, can you shew one tear that ever you shed in earnest for a wrong done to God? Possibly you may weep to see the bed of sorrow which your sins are making for you in hell; but ye never loved God so well, as to mourn for the injury ye have done the name of God. It is a good gloss Augustine hath upon Esau's tears, Heb. xii. *Flevit quod perdidit, non quod vendidit.* He wept that he lost the blessing, not that he sold it. Thus we see an excellency of the saint's sorrow above the hypocrite's. The Christian, by his sorrows, shews himself a conqueror of that sin, which even now overcame him, while the hypocrite by his pride shews himself a slave to a worse lust, than that he resists. While the Christian commits a sin, he hates it: whereas the other loves it while he forbears it.

Secondly, When true grace is under the foot of a temptation, yet then it will stir up in the heart a vehement desire of revenge, like a prisoner in his enemy's hands, who is thinking and plotting how to get out, and what he will do when out, waiting and longing every moment for his delivery, that he may again take up arms: *O God, remember me,* saith *Sampson, this once I pray thee, and strengthen me, that I may be at once avenged on the Philistines for my two eyes,* Judges xvi. 27. Thus prays the gracious soul, that God would but spare him a little, and strengthen him but once before he dies, that he may be avenged on his pride, unbelief, and those sins whereby he hath most dishonoured his God; but a false heart is so far from studying revenge, that he rather swells like the sea, against the law which banks his lust in, and is angry with God, who hath made sin such a leap, that he must hazard his soul if he will have it.

CHAP

CHAP. IV.

Of the Entireness of our Furniture. It must be the whole Armour of God.

3. THE third branch in the saint's furniture is, the entireness thereof, *The whole Armour of God.* The Christian's armour must be complete, and that in a three-fold respect.

SECT. I.—First, He must be armed in every part *cap-a-pee*, soul and body, the powers of the one, and senses of the other, not any part left naked. A dart may fly in at a little hole, (like that which brought a message of death to Ahab, through the joints of his harness) and satan is such an archer, who can shoot at penny-breadth. If all the man be armed, and only the eye left without, satan can soon shoot his fire-balls of lust in at that loop-hole, which will set the whole house on a flame. Eve looked but on the tree, and a poisonous dart struck her to the heart. If the eye be shut, and the ear be open to corrupt communication, satan will soon wriggle in at this hole; if all the outward senses be guarded, and the heart not kept with all diligence, he will soon by his own thoughts be betrayed into satan's hands. Our enemies are on every side, and so must our armour be, *on the right hand, and on the left*, 2 Cor. vi. 7. The apostle calls sin, an enemy that surrounds us. If there be any part of the line unguarded, or weakly provided, there satan falls on; we see the enemy often enter the city at one side, whilst he is beat back on the other, for want of care to keep the whole line. Satan divides his temptations into several squadrons, one he employs to assault here, another to storm there. We read of fleshly wickedness, and spiritual wickedness; whilst thou repellest satan tempting thee to fleshly wickedness, he may be entering thy city at the other gate of spiritual wickedness. Perhaps thou hast kept thy integrity in the practical part of thy life; but what armour hast thou to defend thy head, thy judgment? If he surprise thee here, corrupting that with some error, then thou wilt not long hold out in thy practice. He that could not get thee to prophane the sabbath among sensualists and atheists, will, under the disguise of such a corrupt principle as Christian liberty, prevail. Thus we see what need we have of universal armour, in regard of every part.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The Christian must be in complete armour, in regard of the several pieces and weapons, that make up the whole armour of God. Indeed there is a concatenation of graces, they hang together like links in a chain, stones in an arch, members in the body; prick one vein, and the blood of the whole body may run out at that sluice; neglect one duty, and no other will do us good. The apostle Peter, in his second epistle,

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chap. i. ver. 5, 6, 7. presseth the Christian to a joint endeavour, to encrease the whole body of grace; indeed that is health when the whole body thrives. *Add* (saith he) *to your faith virtue;* faith is the file-leading grace. Well, hast thou faith? add virtue: True faith is of a working, stirring nature; without good works it is dead or dying. *Fides pinguescit operibus*—Luther. 'Tis kept in plight and heart by a holy life, as the flesh which plaisters over the frame of man's body, though it receive his heat from the vitals within, yet helps to preserve the very life of those vitals; thus good works and gracious actions have their life from faith, yet are necessary helps to preserve the life of faith; thus we see sometimes the child nursing the parent that bare it, and therein performs but his duty. Thou art fruitful in good works, yet thou art not out of the devil's shot, except thou addest *to thy virtue, knowledge*. This is the candle, without which faith cannot see to do its work. Art thou going to give an alms? If it be not *oculata charitas*, if charity hath not this eye of knowledge to direct when, how, what, and to whom thou art to give, thou mayest at once wrong God, the person thou relievest, and thyself. Art thou humbling thyself for thy sin? for want of knowledge in the tenour of the gospel, satan may play upon thy ignorance, and either persuade thee thou art not humbled enough, when God knows thou art almost quackled with thy tears, and even carried down by the impetuous torrent of thy sorrow into despair, or else, shewing thee thy blubbered face, may flatter thee into a carnal confidence of thy humiliation. Perhaps thou seest the name of God dishonoured in the place where thou livest, and thy spirit is stirred within thee (as Paul at Athens); now if knowledge sits not in the saddle to rein and bridle in thy zeal, thou wilt be soon carried over hedge and ditch, till thou fallest into some precipice or other by thy irregular acting: Neither is knowledge enough, except thou beest armed with *temperance*, which (I conceive) is that grace, whereby the Christian (as master of his own house) so orders his affections, (like servants to reason and faith), that they do not irregularly move, or inordinately lash out into desires of, cares for, or joy in the creature comforts of this life, without which, satan will be too hard for thee.

The historian tells us, that in one of the famous battles between the English and French, that which lost the French the day was a shower of English arrows, which did so gall their horse, as put the whole army into disorder; their horses knowing no ranks, did tread down their own men. The affections are but as the horse to the rider, on which knowledge should be mounted; if satan's barbed arrows light on them, so that the desires of the creature prove unruly, and jostle with thy desires of Christ,

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thy care to keep thy credit or estate, put thy care to keep a good conscience to disorder; and thy carnal joy in wife and child trample down, or get before thy joy in the Lord; judge on which side victory is like to fall. Well, suppose thou marchest provided thus far in goodly array towards heaven, while thou art swimming in prosperity, must thou not also provide for foul way and weather, I mean, an afflicted estate? Satan will line the hedges with a thousand temptations, when thou comest into the narrow lanes of adversity, where thou canst not run from this sort of temptation, as in the campaign of prosperity. Possibly thou that didst escape the snare of an alluring world, mayest be dismounted by the same when it frowns; though repentance kept thee from being drunk with the sweet wines of those pleasures, yet for want of patience, thou mayest be drunk with the wine of astonishment, which is in affliction's hand: Therefore, saith the Apostle, to *temperance, add patience:* either possess thyself in patience, or else some raving devil of discontent will possess thee. An impatient soul in affliction is a bedlamite in chains; yea, too like the devil in his chains, that rageth against God whilst he is fettered by him. Well, hast thou patience? an excellent grace indeed, but not enough; thou must be a pious man as well as a patient. Therefore, saith the Apostle, *to patience, add godliness.* There is an atheistical stupid patience, and there is a godly Christian patience: satan numbs the conscience of the one, and no wonder he complains not that feels not; but the spirit of Christ sweetly calms the other, not by taking away the sense of pain, but by overcoming it with the sense of his love. Now godliness comprehends the whole worship of God, inward and outward. If thou beest never so exact in thy morals, and not a worshipper of God, then thou art an atheist. If thou dost worship God, and that devoutly, but not by scripture-rule, thou art an idolater. If according to the rule, but not in spirit and truth, then thou art an hypocrite, and so fallest into the devil's mouth. Or if thou dost give God one piece of his worship, and deniest another, still satan comes to his market, Prov. xxviii. 9. *He that turneth back his ear from hearing the law, his prayer is an abomination to the Lord.* Yet, Christian, all thy armour is not on. Thy godliness indeed would suffice, wert thou to live in a world by thyself, or hadst nothing to do but immediate communion with God. But, Christian, thou must not always dwell on this mount of immediate worship; and when thou descendest, thou hast many brethren and servants to thy Father, who live with thee in the same family; and thou must comport thyself becomingly, or else thy Father will be angry. First, thou hast brethren, heirs of the same promise with thee, therefore you must add to holiness *brotherly-kindness.* If satan can set you at odds, he gives a deep wound

wound to your godliness. You will hardly join hearts in a duty, that cannot join hands in love. Secondly, There are not only brethren, but servants, a multitude of prophane carnal ones, who though they never had the names of sons and daughters, yet retain to God's family, and thy heavenly Father will have thee walk unblameably, yea, winningly to those that are without; which that thou mayest do, thou must add to brotherly kindness, *charity*, by which grace thou shalt be willing to do good to the worst of men: When they curse thee, thou must pray for them; yea, pray for no less than a Christ, a heaven for them. *Father, forgive them*, said Christ, while they were raking in his side for his heart's blood. And truly I am persuaded, the want of this last piece of armour hath given satan great advantage in these our times. We are so afraid our charity should be too broad, whereas in this sense, if it be not as wide as the world, it is too strait for the command which bids us *do good to all*. May not we ministers be charged with the want of this? When the strain of our preaching is solely directed to the saints, and no pains taken in rescuing poor captivated souls, yet uncalled out of the devil's clutches, who may haul them to hell without any disturbance, while we are comforting the saints, and preaching their privileges; but in the mean time let the ignorant be ignorant still, and the prophane, prophane still, for want of a compassionate charity to their souls, which would excite us to the reproving and exhorting of them, that they might also be brought into the way of life, as well as the saints encouraged, who are walking therein. We are stewards to provide bread for the Lord's house; the greatest part of our hearers cannot, must not have the children's bread, and shall we therefore give them no portion at all? Christ's charity pitied the multitude, to whom, in his public preaching, he made special application, as in that famous sermon, most part of which is spent in rousing up the sleepy consciences of the hypocritical Pharisees, by those thunder-claps of woes and curses so often denounced against them, Matth. xxiii. Again, how great advantage hath satan from the want of this charity in our families? Is it not observed how little care is taken by professing governors of such societies, for the instructing their youth? Nay, it is a principle which some have drank in, that it is not their duty. O where is their charity in the mean time, when they can see satan come within their own walls, and let him drive a child, a servant, in their ignorance and profaneness to hell, and not so much as sally out upon his enemy by a word of reproof or instruction, to rescue their silly souls out of the murderer's hands? We must leave them to their liberty forsooth, and that is as fair play as we can give the devil; give but corrupt nature enough of this rope, and it will soon strangle the very principles of God and religion in their tender years.

SECT.

SECT. III. Thirdly, The entireness of the saint's armour may be taken not only for every part and piece of the saint's furniture, but for the completeness and perfection of every piece. As the Christian is to endeavour after every grace, so is he to press after the advance and increase of every grace, even to perfection itself; as he is to add to his faith, virtue, so is he to add faith to faith, he is ever to be completing of his grace. It is that which is frequently pressed upon believers, Matt. v. 48. *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. And purify yourselves as God is pure.* Where we have an exact copy set, not as if we could equal that purity and perfection which is in God, but to make us strive the more, when we shall see how infinitely short we fall of our copy when we write the fairest hand. So James i. 3. *Let patience have its perfect work, that you may be entire, wanting nothing*, or wanting in nothing. Thou who makest a hard shift to carry a little burden with thy little patience, would sink under a greater; therefore there is need that patience should be ever perfecting, lest at last we meet a burden too heavy for our weak shoulders. Take a few reasons why the Christian should be thus completing of his grace.

First, Because grace is subject to decay, and thus ever needs completing; as in an army, especially one which often engageth in battle, their arms are battered and broken, one man hath his helmet bent, another his sword gapt, a third his pistol unfixed; and therefore recruits are ever necessary. In one temptation, the Christian hath his helmet of hope beaten off his head, in another, his patience hard put to it. The Christian had need have an armour-shop at hand to make up his loss, and that speedily; for satan is most like to fall on, when the Christian is least prepared to receive his charge. *Simon, Simon, satan hath desired to sift you.* He knew they were at that time weakly provided; Christ their captain now to be taken from the head of their troop; discontents among themselves, striving who should be the greatest; and their recruits of stronger grace, which the spirit was to bring, not yet come. Now he hath a design to surprise them; and therefore Christ, carefully to prevent him, promiseth speedily to dispatch his spirit for their supply, Acts i. 4. and in the mean time sends them to Jerusalem, to stand as it were in a body in their joint supplications, upon their guard, while he comes to their relief, shewing us in the weakness of our graces what to do, and whither to go for supply.

Secondly, Because satan is completing his skill and wrath. It is not for nought that he is called the old serpent, subtle by nature, but more by experience; wrathful by nature, yet every day more and more enraged: like a bull, the longer he is baited, the more fury he shews: and therefore we who are to grapple with him,

him, now his time is so short, had need come well appointed into the field.

Thirdly, It is the end of all God's dispensations, to complete his saints in their graces and comforts. Wherefore doth he lop and prune by afflictions, but to *purge, that they may bring forth more fruit*, James v. 2. (that is, fuller and fairer.) *Tribulation works patience*, Rom. xv. 3. It is God's appointment for that end. *It works*, that is, it encreaseth the saint's patience; it enrageth indeed the wicked, but meekens the saints. It is his design in the gospel preached, to carry on his saints *from faith to faith*, Rom. i. 17. And accordingly he hath furnished the church with instruments, and those with gifts, *for the perfecting of the saints, and for the edifying of the body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 14. Wherefore doth the scaffold stand, and the workman on it, if the buildings go not up? For us not to advance under such means, is to make void the counsel of God. Therefore the apostle blames the Christian Jews, Heb. v. 12. for their non-proficiency in the school of Christ, *When for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.*

Use. O how few there are who endeavour thus to promote their spiritual state, and labour to perfect what is yet lacking in their knowledge, patience, and the rest. First, tell some of adding faith to faith, one degree of grace to another, and you shall find they have more mind to join house to house, and lay field to field: their souls are a-thirst, ever gaping for more, but of what? Not of Christ or heaven: it is earth; earth they never think they have enough of, till death comes and stops their mouth with a shovelful digged out of their own grave. What a tormenting life must they needs have, who are always crying for more weight, and yet cannot pass their covetous desires to death? O sirs, the only way (if men would believe it) to quench this thirst to the creature, were to enkindle another after Christ and heaven. Get but a large heart vehemently thirsting after these, and the other will die alone; as the feverish thirst doth, when nature comes to her temper. Secondly, others labour not thus to perfect grace, because they have a conceit they are perfect already, and upon this fancy throw away praying, hearing, and all other ordinances, as strings for those babes in grace to be carried by, who are not arrived to their high attainments. O what fools does pride make men! Truly heaven were no such desirable place, if we should be no more perfect than this, a sort of people that are too high for this world, and too low for another. The way by which God cures this phrensy of pride, we have in these days seen to be something like that in Nebuchadnezzar, to give them a heart of a beast (I mean) for a time, suffer them to fall into beastly practices,

tices, by which he shews them how far they are from that perfection they dreamed of so vainly. Thirdly, others who have true grace, and desire the advancement of it, yet are discouraged in their endeavour for more, from too deep a sense of their present penury. Bid some such labour to get more power of corruption, more faith on, and love to God, that they may be able to do the will of God cheerfully, and suffer it in the greatest afflictions patiently, yea, thankfully, and they will never believe, that they, whose faith is so weak, and love so chill, and stock so little in hand, should ever attain to any thing like such a pitch. You may as well persuade a beggar, with one poor penny in his purse, that if he will go and trade with that, he shall come to be Lord Mayor of London before he die. But why, poor hearts, should you thus despise the day of small things? Do you not see a little grain of mustard-seed spread into a tree, and weak grace compared to it, for its growth at last, as well as littleness at first? Darest thou say thou hast no grace at all? If thou hast but any, (though the least that ever any had to begin with,) I dare tell thee that he hath done more for thee in that, than he should in making that which is now so weak, as perfect as the saints grace is now in heaven. First, he hath done more, considering it as an act of power. There is a greater gulph between no grace and grace, than between weak grace and strong, between a chaos and nothing, than between a chaos and this beautiful frame of heaven and earth. The first day's work of both creations is the greatest. Secondly, considered as an act of grace, it is a greater mercy to give the first grace of conversion, than to crown that with glory. It is more grace and condescension in a Prince to marry a poor damsel, than after having married her, to clothe her like a Princess: he was free to do the first, or not; but his relation to her pleads strongly for the other. God might have chosen whether he would have given thee grace, or not; but having done this, thy relation to him and his covenant also do oblige him to add more and more, till he hath fitted thee as a bride for himself in glory.

CHAP. V.

Of the Use of our Spiritual Armour, or the Exercise of Grace.

THE fourth and last branch in the saints furniture is, the use they are to make thereof, *Put on the whole Armour of God.* Briefly, what is this duty, *Put on?* These being saints (many of them at least) he writes to, it is not only putting on by conversion,

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what some of them might not yet have; but also, he means they should exercise what they have. It is one thing to have armour in the house, and another thing to have it buckled on; to have grace in the principle, and grace in the act. So that the instruction will be,

Doct. It is not enough to have grace, but this grace must be kept in exercise. The Christian armour is made to be worn; no laying down, or putting off our armour, till we have done our warfare, and finished our course. Our armour and our garment of flesh go off together; then indeed will be no need of watch and ward, shield or helmet. Those military duties and field graces (as I may call faith, hope, and the rest), they shall be honourably discharged. In heaven we shall appear not in armour, but in robes of glory; but here they are to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep in them, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ. This Paul professeth to endeavour, Acts xxiv. 16. *Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.* Here we have this holy man at his arms, training and exercising himself in his postures, like some soldier by himself handling his pike, and inuring himself before the battle. Now the reason of this is,

SECT. I.—First, Christ commands us to have our armour on, our grace in exercise, Luke xii. 35. *Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning.* Christ speaks either in a martial phrase, as to soldiers; or in a domestic, as to servants: If as to soldiers, then let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, is, that we should be ready for a march, having our armour on (for the belt goes over all), and our match-light ready to give fire at the first alarm of temptation. If as to servants, which seems more natural, then he bids us (as our master is gone abroad) not through sloth or sleep put off our clothes, and put out our lights, but stand ready to open when he shall come, though at midnight. It is not fit the master should stand at the door knocking, and the servant within sleeping; indeed there is no duty the Christian hath in charge but implies this daily exercise, *Pray*, but how? *without ceasing*. *Rejoice*, but when? *evermore*. *Give thanks*, for what? *in every thing*, 1 Thes. v. 16, 17. The shield of faith and helmet of hope, we must hold them to the end, 1 Pet. i. 13. The sum of all which is, that we should walk in the constant exercise of these duties and graces. Where the soldier is placed, there he stands, and must neither stir nor sleep till he be brought off. When Christ comes, that soul only shall have his blessing whom *he finds so doing*.

Secondly, Satan's advantage is great when grace is not in exercise. When the devil found Christ so ready to receive his charge, and repel his temptation, he soon had enough; it is said,

He departed for a season, Luke iv. 13. as if in his shameful retreat he had comforted himself with hopes of surprising Christ unawares, at another season more advantageous to his design; and we find him coming again, in the most likely time indeed to have attained his end, had his enemy been man, and not God.—Now, if this bold fiend did thus watch and observe Christ from time to time, doth it not behove thee to look about thee, lest he take thy grace at one time or other napping? what he misseth now by thy watchfulness, he may gain anon by thy negligence. Indeed he hopes thou wilt be tired out with continual duty: Surely, saith satan (when he sees the Christian up, and fervent in duty), this will not hold long. When he finds him tender of conscience, and scrupulous of occasion to sin, This is but for a while, 'ere long I shall have him unbend his bow, and unbuckle his armour, and then have at him. Satan knows what order thou keepest in thy house and closet, and though he hath not a key to thy heart, yet he can stand in the next room to it, and lightly hear what is whispered there. He hunts the Christian by the scent of his own feet, and if once he doth but smell which way the heart inclines, he knows how to take the hint; if but one door be unbolted, one work unarmed, one grace off its carriage, here is advantage enough.

Thirdly, Because it is so sore a business, and hard a work, to recover the activity of grace once lost, and to revive a duty in disuse: *I have put off my coat,* saith the spouse, Cant. v. 3. She hath given way to a lazy distemper, was laid upon her bed of sloth, and how hard is it to raise her? Her beloved is at the door, beseeching her by all the means of love, which might bring to her remembrance the near relation between them; *my sister, my love, my dove, open to me:* and yet she riseth not: He tells her, *His locks are filled with the drops of the night;* yet she stirs not: What is the matter? Her coat was off, and she is loth to put it on; she had given way to her sloth, and now she knows not how to shake it off: She could have been glad to have her beloved's company, if himself would have opened the door; and he desired as much hers, if she would rise to let him in: and upon these terms they part. The longer a soul hath neglected duty, the more ado there is to get it taken up; partly through shame, the soul having played the truant, now knows not how to look God in the face; and partly from the difficulty of the work, being double to what another finds, that walks in the exercise of his grace; here is all out of order. It requires more time and pains for him to tune his instrument, than for another to play the lesson. He goes to duty as to a new work, as a scholar that hath not looked on his book some while, his lesson is almost out of his head; whereas another that was but even now conning it over,

hath

hath it *ad unguem*. Perhaps 'tis an affliction thou art called to bear, and thy patience unexercised, little or no thought thou hast had for such a time (while thou wert frisking in a full pasture), and now thou kickest and flingest, even *as a bullock, unaccustomed to the yoke*, Jer. xxxi. 18. Whereas another goes meekly and patiently under the like cross, because he had been stirring up his patience, and fitting the yoke to his neck.—You know what a confusion there is in a town, at some sudden alarm in the dead of the night, the enemy at the gates, and they asleep within, O what a cry is there heard! one wants his clothes, another his sword, a third knows not what to do for powder; thus in a fright they run up and down; which would not be, if the enemy did find them upon their guard, orderly waiting for his approach. Such a hubbub there is in a soul that keeps not his armour on, this piece and that will be to seek when he should use it.

Fourthly, We must keep grace in exercise in respect of others, our fellow-soldiers. Paul had this in his eye, when he was exercising himself to keep a good conscience, that he might not be a scandal to others. The cowardice of one may make others run; the ignorance of one soldier that hath not skill to handle his arms, may do mischief to his fellow-soldiers about him; some have shot their friends for their enemies; the unwise walking of one professor makes many others fare the worse. But say, thou dost not fall so far as to become a scandal, yet thou canst not be so helpful to thy fellow-brethren as thou shouldst. God commanded the *Reubenites* and *Gadites* to go before their brethren ready armed, until the land was conquered. Thus, Christian, thou art to be helpful to thy fellow-brethren, who have not (it may be) that settlement of peace in their spirit as thyself, nor that measure of grace or comfort: Thou art to help such weak ones, and go before them (as it were) armed for their defence: Now if thy grace be not exercised, thou art so far unserviceable to thy weak brother. Perhaps thou art a master or parent, who hast a family under thy wing; they fare as thou thrivest; if thy heart be in a holy frame, they fare the better in the duties thou performest; if thy heart be dead and down, they are losers by thy hand. So that as the nurse eats the more for the babe's sake she suckles, so shouldst thou, for their sake who are under thy tuition, be more careful to exercise thy own grace and cherish it.

SECT. II. *Object.* O but (may some say) this is a hard work indeed, our armour never off, our grace always in exercise. Did God ever mean religion should be such a toilsome business as this would make it?

Ans. Thou speakest like one of the foolish world, and shewest thyself a mere stranger to the Christian's life that speakest thus. A burden to exercise grace! Why, it is no burden to exercise

the acts of nature, to eat, to drink, to walk, all delightful to us in our right temper; if any of these be otherwise, nature is oppressed; if stuffed, then difficult to breathe; if sick, then the meat offensive we eat: So take a saint in his right temper, 'tis his joy to be employed in the exercise of his grace in this or that duty, Ps. cxxii. 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord:* his heart leaped at the motion. When any occasion diverts him from communion with God, though he likes it never so well, yet it is unwelcome and unpleasing to him; as you who are used to be in your shops from morning to night, how tedious is it for you to be abroad some days, though among good friends, because you are not where your work and calling lies? A Christian in duty is one in his calling, as it were in his shop, where he should be, yea, where he would be, and therefore far from being tedious. Religion is so burdensome to none, as to those who are unfrequent in the exercise of it. Use makes heavy things light; we hardly feel the weight of our clothes, because fitted to us, and worn daily by us; whereas the same weight on our shoulder would trouble us. Thus the grievousness of religious duties to carnal ones, is taken away in the saints, partly by the fitness of them to the saints principles, as also by their daily exercise in them. The disciples, when newly entered into the ways of Christ, could not pray much, or fast long; the bottles were new, and that wine too strong; but when they had walked a few years, they grew mighty in both. Dost thou complain that heaven's way is rugged? Be the ofter walking in it, and that will make it smooth.

But, Secondly, Were this constant exercise of grace more troublesome to the flesh (which is the only complainer), the sweet advantage that accrues by this to the Christian will abundantly recompense all his labour and pains.

First, The exercise of thy grace will increase thy grace; *The diligent hand maketh rich.* A provident man counts that lost which might have been got, not only when his money is stole out of his chest, but when it lies there unimproved. Such a commodity (saith the tradesman) if I had bought with that money in my bags, would have brought me in so much gain, which is now lost; so the Christian may say, My dawning knowledge, had I followed on to know the Lord, might have spread to broad day. *I have more understanding*, saith David, *than all my teachers.* How came he by it? He will tell you in the next words, *for thy testimonies are my meditation*, Psal. cxix. 99. He was more in the exercise of duty and grace. The best wits are not always the greatest scholars, because their study is not suitable to their parts; neither always proves he the richest man, that sets up with the greatest stock. A little grace well husbanded by daily exercise will increase, when greater, neglected, shall decay.

Secondly,

Secondly, As exercise increaseth, so it evidenceth grace.—Would a man know whether he be lame or no, let him rise; he will be sooner satisfied by one turn in a room, than by a long dispute, and he sit still. Wouldst thou know whether thou lovest God? Be frequent in exerting acts of love; the more the fire is blown up, the sooner it is seen; and so of all other graces. Sometimes the soul is questioning whether it hath any patience, any faith, 'till God comes and puts him into an afflicted estate (where he must either exercise this grace, or perish); and then it appears like one that thinks he cannot swim; yet being thrown into the river, then uniting all his strength, he makes a shift to swim to land, and sees what he can do. How oft have we heard Christians say, I thought I could never have endured such a pain, trusted God in such a strait: but now God hath taught me what he can do for me, what he hath wrought in me; and this thou mightst have known before, if thou wouldst have often stirred up and exercised thy grace.

Thirdly, Exercise of grace doth invite God to communicate himself to such a soul. God sets the Christian at work, and then meets him in it. *Up and be doing, and the Lord be with you.* He sets a soul a-reading, as the eunuch, and then joins to his chariot a praying, and then comes the messenger from heaven. *O Daniel, greatly beloved.* The spouse who lost her beloved *on her bed*, finds him as she comes *from the sermon*, Cant. iii. 4. *It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loved.*

SECT. III.—*Use* 1. This falls heavy on their heads, who are so far from exercising grace, that they walk in the exercise of their lusts; their hearts are like a glass-house, the fire is never out, the shop-windows never shut, they are always at work, hammering some wicked project or other upon the anvil of their hearts; there are some who give scope to their lusts; what their wretched hearts will, they will have; they cocker their lusts, as some their children, deny them nothing, who (as it is recorded of David to Adonijah) do not so much as say to their souls, Why dost thou so? why art thou so proud, so covetous, so prophane? They spend their days in making provision for these guests; as at some inns, the house never cools, but as one guest goes out, another comes in; as one lust is served, another is calling for attendance. As some exercise grace more than others, so there are greater traders in sin, that set more a-work than others, and return more wrath in a day than others in a month. Happy are such (in comparison of these), who are chained up by God's restraint upon their outward man or inward, that they cannot drive on so furiously as these, who by health of body, power, and greatness in place, riches and treasures in their coffers, numbness and dedo-

lency in their consciences, are hurried on to fill up the measure of their sins. We read of the Assyrian, that he *enlarged his heart as hell*, stretching out his desires, as men do their bags that are pressed full with money to hold more, Hab. ii. 5. Thus the adulterer, as if his body were not quick enough to execute the commands of his lust, stirs it up by sending forth his amorous glances, which come home *laden with adultery*, blows up this fire with unchaste sonnets, and belly-cheer, proper fuel for the devil's kitchen; and the malicious man, who, that he may lose no time for his lust, is a-tearing his neighbour in pieces as he lies on his bed, cannot sleep unless some such bloody sacrifice be offered to his ravening lust. O how may this shame the saints! How oft is your zeal so hot, that you cannot sleep till your hearts have been in heaven, as you are on your beds, and there pacified with the sight of your dear Saviour, and some embraces of love from him?

Use 2. It reproves those who flout and mock at the saints, while exercising their graces; none so jeered as the saint in his calling. Men may work in their shops, and every one follow his calling as diligently as they please, and no wonder made of this by those that pass by in the streets; but let the Christian be seen at work for God, in the exercise of any duty or grace, and he is hooted at, despised, yea, hated. Few so bad indeed, but seem to like religion in the notion! They can commend a sermon of holiness, like a discourse of God or Christ, in the pulpit; but when these are really set before their eyes, as they sparkle in a saint's conversation, they are very contemptible and hateful to them; this living and walking holiness bites; and though they liked the preacher's art, in painting forth the same in his discourse, yet now they run from them, and spit at them; this exercise of grace offends the prophane heart, and stirs up the enmity that lies within: as Michal, she could not but flout David, to see him dancing before the ark. He that commended the preacher for making a learned discourse of zeal, will rail on a saint expressing an act of zeal in his place and calling; now grace comes too near him. A naughty heart must stand at some distance from holiness, that the beams thereof may not bear too strongly on his conscience, and so he likes it. Thus the Pharisees, the prophets of old, these were holy men in their account, and they can lavish out their money on their tombs in honour of them; but Christ (who was more than all of them), he is scorned and hated; what is the mystery of this? The reason was, these prophets are off the stage, and Christ on. *Pascitur in vivis livor, post fata quiescit.*

Use 3. Try by this whether you have grace or no; dost thou walk in the exercise of thy grace? He that hath clothes, surely will wear them, and not be seen naked. Men talk of their faith, repentance,

repentance, love to God; these are precious graces, but why do they not let us see these walking abroad in their daily conversation? Surely if such guests were in thy soul, they would look out sometimes at the window, and be seen abroad in this duty and that holy action; grace is of a stirring nature, and not such a dead thing (like an image), that you may lock up in a chest, and none shall know what God you worship; no, grace will shew itself, it will walk with you in all places and companies, it will buy with you, and sell for you, it will have a hand in all your enterprizes; it will comfort you when you are sincere and faithful for God, and it will complain and chide you when you are otherwise; go to, stop its mouth, and heaven shall hear its voice; it will groan, mourn, and strive, even as a living man when you would smother him. I will as soon believe the man to be alive, that lies peaceably, as he is nailed up in his coffin, without strife or bustle, as that thou hast grace, and never exercise it in any act of spiritual life. What, man! hast thou grace, and carried so peaceably, as a fool to the stocks, by thy lust? Why hangest thou there, nailed to thy lust? If thou hast grace, come down and we will believe it; but if thou art such a tame slave, as to sit still under the command of lust, thou deceivest thyself. Hast thou grace, and shew none of it in the condition thou art placed in? May be, thou art rich, dost thou shew thy humility towards those that are beneath thee? Dost thou shew a heavenly mind breathing after heaven more than earth? It may be thy heart is puffed with thy estate, that thou lookst on the poor as creatures of some lower species than thyself, and disdainest them, and as for heaven thou thinkest not of it: like that wicked prince, that said, He would lose his part in Paradise rather than in Paris. Art thou poor, why dost thou not exercise grace in that condition? Art thou contented, diligent? May be, instead of contentation, thou repinest; canst not see a fair lace on thy rich brother's cloth, but grudgest it, instead of concurring with providence by diligence to supply thy wants: Thou art ready to break through the hedge into thy neighbour's fat pasture, thus serving thy own turn by a sin, rather than waiting for God's blessing on thy honest diligence; if so, be not angry should we call thee by thy right name, or at least question whether we may style thee Christian, whose carriage is so cross to that sacred name, which is too holy to be written on a rotten post.

Use 4. Be exhorted, O ye saints of God, to walk in the exercise of grace. It is the minister's duty, with the continual breath of exhortation, and, if need be, reproof, to keep this heavenly fire clear on the saint's altar. Peter saw it necessary to have bellows always in his hands, 2 Pet. i. 12. *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of those things, though ye know*

them, and be established in the present truth: that shall not take him off, as long as he is in this tabernacle; he saith he will stir them up, and be putting *them in remembrance*, v. 13. There is a sleepy disease we are subject to in this life; Christ, though he had roused up his disciples twice, yet takes them napping the third time. Either exercise thy grace, or satan will act thy corruption; as one bucket goes down, the other riseth; there is a body of sin within, which, like a malignant party, watcheth for such a time to step into the saddle, and 'tis easier to keep them down than to pull them down. Thy time is short and thy way long; thou hast best put on, lest thou meanest to be overtaken with night before thou gettest within sight of thy Father's house. How uncomfortable 'tis for a traveller in heaven-road (above all other) to go potching in the dark, many can with aching hearts tell thee! And what hast thou here to mind like this? Are they worldly cares and pleasures? Is it wisdom to lay out so much cost on thy tenement, which thou art leaving, and forget what thou must carry with thee? Before the fruit of these be ripe which thou art now planting, thyself may be rotting in thy grave. *Time is short*, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 29. The world is near its port, and therefore God hath contracted the sails of man's life but a while, and there will not be a point to choose whether we had wives or not, riches or not, but there will be a vast difference between those that had grace, and those that had not; yea, between those that did drive a quick trade in the exercise thereof, and those that were more remiss; the one shall have an *abundant entrance into glory*, 2 Pet. i. 11. while the other shall suffer loss in much of his lading, which shall be cast over-board as merchandize that will bear no price in that heavenly country; yea, while thou art here, others shall fare the better by thy lively graces. Thy cheerfulness and activity in thy heavenly course will help others that travel with thee; he is dull indeed that will not put on, when he sees so much metal for God in thee who leadest the way. Yea, thy grace will give a check to the sins of others, who never stand in such awe, as when grace comes forth and sits like a ruler in the gate, to be seen of all that pass by. The swearer knows not such majesty is present, when the Christian is mealy-mouthed, and so goes on and fears no colours; whose grace, had it but her dagger of zeal ready, and courage to draw it forth in a wise reproof, would make sin quit the place, and with shame run into its hole, Job xxix. 8. *The young men saw me, and hid themselves; the princes refrained talking, and laid their hand on their mouth.* And doth not God deserve the best service thou canst do him in thy generation? Did he give thee grace to lay it up as dead stock, and none to be the better? Or can you say, that he is wanting to you in his love and mercy? Are they not

ever

ever in exercise for your good? Is the eye of providence ever shut? No, *He slumbers not* that keeps thee; or is it one moment off thee? No, *The eye of the Lord is upon the righteous;* he hath fixed it for ever, and with infinite delight pleaseth himself in the object. When was his ear shut, or his hand, either from receiving thy cries, or supplying thy wants? Nay, doth not thy condition take up the thoughts of God, and are they any other than thoughts of peace which he entertains? A few drops of this oil will keep the wheel in motion.

That ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil.

THESE words present us with a reason, why the Christian soldier is to be thus completely armed, *That he may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* The strength of which argument lies in these two particulars.

First, The danger, if unarmed; the enemy is no mean contemptible one, no less than the devil, set out as a cunning engineer by his wiles and stratagems.

Secondly, The certainty of standing against all his wits and wiles, if we be thus armed, *That ye may be able to stand.* As no standing without armour, so no fear of falling into the fiend's hands, if armed.

To begin with the first, the saints enemy, the devil, described by his wiles, properly the methods of satan, which signifies that art and order one observes in handling a point; we say, Such a one is methodical: Now because it shews ingenuity and acuteness of wit so to compose a discourse, therefore it is transferred to express the subtilty of satan in laying of his plots and stratagems, in his warlike preparations against the Christian. Indeed the expert soldier hath his order as well as the scholar; there is method in forming of an army, as well as framing an argument. The note which lies before us is,

Doct. The devil is a very subtle enemy. The Christian is endangered most by his policy and craft; he is called the old serpent. The serpent: subtle above other creatures, an old serpent above other serpents: Satan was too crafty for man in his perfection, much more now in his maimed estate, having never recovered that first crack he got in his understanding by the fall of Adam. And as man hath lost, so satan hath gained more and more experience; he lost his wisdom indeed as soon as he became a devil, but ever since he hath increased his craft; though he hath not wisdom enough to do himself good, yet subtilty enough to do others hurt. God shews us where his strength lies, when he

he promiseth he will *bruise the head of the serpent;* his head crushed, and he dies presently. Now, in handling this point of satan's subtilty, we shall consider him in his two main designs, and therein shew you his wiles and policies. His first main design is, to draw into sin. The second is to accuse, vex, and trouble the saint for sin. First, Let us consider the devil as a tempter to sin, and there he shews his wily subtilty in three things.

First, In choosing the most advantageous season for tempting.

Secondly, In managing his temptations, laying them in such a method and form, as shews his craft.

Thirdly, In pitching on fit instruments for his turn, to carry on his design.

CHAP. I.

Of Satan's Subtilty to choose out the most advantageous Seasons for tempting.

FIRST, He shews his subtilty, in choosing the most proper and advantageous seasons for tempting. *To every thing there is a season,* Solomon saith, Eccles. iii. 1. that is, a nick of time, which taken, gives facility and speedy dispatch to a business: and therefore the same wise man gives this reason, why man miscarries so frequently, and is disappointed in his enterprizes, *because he knows not his time,* Eccl. ix. 11.; he comes when the bird is flown. A hundred soldiers at one time may turn a battle, or save an army, when thousands will not do it at another. Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if any time) he is most likely to be entertained. As Christ hath *the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season* of counsel and comfort, to a doubting drooping soul, so satan shews his black art, and hellish skill, in speaking words of seduction and temptation in season; and a word in season is *a word on its wheels.* I shall give you a view of his subtilty in special seasons, which he chooseth to tempt in.

1. The first season he takes to tempt in is, when newly converted. No sooner is this child of grace, the new creature, born, but this dragon pours a flood of temptation after it. He learnt the Egyptians but some of his own craft, when he taught them that bloody and cruel baptism, which they exercised upon the Israelitish babes, in throwing them into the river as soon as they were born. The first cry of the new creature gives all the legions of hell an alarm: they are much troubled at it, as Herod and Jerusalem

rusalem were, when Christ was born; and now they sit in council to take away the life of this new-born King. The apostles met with more opposition and persecution in their latter days, when endued with large portions of the spirit; but with temptations from satan in the former, when young converts, as you may observe in the several passages recorded of them. Satan knew grace within was but weak, and their supplies promised at the spirit's coming, not landed; and when is an enemy more like to carry the town than in such a low condition? and therefore he tries them all. Indeed the advantages are so many, that we may wonder how the young convert escapes with his life; knowledge weak, and so soon led into an error, especially in divided times; when many ways are held forth, one saying, Here is Christ; another, There is Christ; and the Christian ready to think every one means honestly that comes with good words; as a little child that hath lost his way to his father's house, is prone to follow any that offer him their conduct. Experience of what he knows little; and if Adam, whose knowledge was so perfect, yet was soon cheated (being assaulted before he was well warm in his new possessions), how much more advantage hath satan of the new convert? in whom he finds every grace in so great an indisposition to make resistance, both from its own weakness, and the strength of the contrary corruption (which commonly in such is much unmortified), which makes it act with more difficulty and mixture, as in a fire newly kindled, where the smoke is more than the flame; or like beer newly tunned, which runs thick; so that though there appear more strength of affection in such, that it works over into a greater abundance of duty than in others, yet with more dregs of carnal passion, which satan knows, and therefore chooseth to stir what he sees troubled already.

2. Secondly, When the saint is beset with some great affliction, this is as some blind lane or solitary place, fit for this thief to call for his purse in. An expert captain first labours to make a breach in the wall, and then falls on in storming the city. Satan first got power from God to weaken Job in his estate, children, health, and other comforts he had, and now tempts him to impatience, and what not? He lets Christ fast forty days before he comes, and then he falls to his work: as an army stays till a castle be pinched for provision within, and then sends a parley, never more likely to be embraced than in such a strait. A temptation comes strong, when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that satan is wooing to. When one is poor, and satan comes, What, wilt thou starve rather than step over the hedge, and steal for thy supply? this is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

3. Thirdly, When the Christian is about some notable enterprize

prize for God's glory, then satan will lie like a serpent in the way, *an adder in the path, that biteth his horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.* Thus he stood at Joshua's right hand *to resist him.* The right hand is the working hand, and his standing there implies his desire to hinder him in his enterprize. Indeed the devil was never a friend to temple work, and therefore that work is so long a-doing. What a handsome excuse doth he help the Jews unto, *The time is not come:* God's time was come, but not the devil's; and therefore he helps them to this poor shift, perverting the sense of providence, as if it were not time, because they were so poor; whereas they thrive no better, because they went no sooner about the work, as God tells them plainly. Paul and Barnabas had a holy design in their thoughts to go visit the brethren in every city, and strengthen their faith: the devil knew what a blow this might give to his kingdom, their visiting might hinder him in his circuit, and he stirs up an unhappy difference between these two holy men, who grow so hot that they part in this storm, Acts xv. 30. There were two remarkable periods of Christ's life, his *intrat* and *exit*, his entrance into his public ministry at his baptism, and his finishing it at his passion; and at both we have the devil fiercely encountering him. The more public thy place, Christian, and the more eminent thy service for God, the more thou must look that the devil will have some more dangerous design or other against thee; and therefore if every private soldier needs armour against satan's bullets of temptation, then the commanders and officers, who stand in the front of battle, much more.

4. Fourthly, When he hath the presence of some object to enforce his temptation. Thus he takes Eve when she is near the tree, and had it in her eye, while he should make the motion, that assaulting two ports at once, it might be the harder for her to hinder the landing of his temptation; and if Eve's eyes did so soon affect her heart with an inordinate desire, then much more now is it easy for him by the presence of the object, to excite and actuate that lust, which lies dormant in the heart. As Naomi sent her daughter to lie at Boaz's feet, knowing well, if he endured her there, there was hope that he might take her into his bed at last: If the Christian can let the object come so near, satan will promise himself his suit may in time be granted. Therefore it should be our care, if we would not yield to the sin, not to walk by, or sit at the door of the occasion: Look not on that beauty with a wandering eye, by which thou wouldst not be taken prisoner; parley not with that in thy thoughts, which thou meanest not to let into thy heart: conversation begets affection; some by this have been brought to marry those, whom at first they thought they could not have liked.

5. Fifthly,

5. Fifthly, After great manifestations of God's love, then the tempter comes. Such is the weak constitution of grace, that it can neither bear smiles nor frowns from God, without a snare: As one said of our English nation, It cannot well bear liberty nor bondage in the height: So neither can the soul; if God smile and open himself a little familiarly to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton: if he frown, then we sink as much in our faith; thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, brings up the weeds of corruption; and the other, like sharp frosts, nips and even kills the flowers of grace. The Christian is in danger on both hands; therefore satan takes this advantage, when the Christian is flush of comfort; even as a cheater, who strikes in with some young heir, when he hath newly received his rents, and never leaves till he hath eased him of his money; thus satan lies upon the catch, to inveigle a saint into one sin or another, which he knows will soon leak out his joy. Had ever any a larger testimony from heaven than Peter, Matth. xvi. 17. where Christ pronounceth him blessed, and puts a singular honour upon him, making him the representative for all his saints. No doubt this favour to Peter stirred up the envious spirit sooner to fall upon him. If Joseph's party-coloured coat made the patriarchs to plot against him their brother, no wonder malice should prompt satan to shew his spite, where Christ had set such a mark of love and honour; and therefore we find him soon at Peter's elbow, making him his instrument to tempt his master, who soon espied his cloven feet, and rebukes Peter with a *Get thee behind me, satan.* He that seemed a rock even now, through satan's policy is laid a stone of offence for Christ to stumble at. So David, when he had received such wonderful mercies, settled on his throne with the ruin of his enemies, yea, pardoned for his bloody sin, now ready to lay down his head with peace in the dust; satan chops in to cloud his clear evening, and tempts him to number the people; so ambitious is satan, then chiefly to throw the saint into the mire of sin, when his coat is cleanest.

6. Sixthly, At the hour of death, when the saint is down and prostrate in his bodily strength, now this coward falls upon him: 'tis the last cast indeed he hath for the game, now or never, overcome him now and ever. As they say of the natural serpent, He is never seen at his length till dying, so this mystical serpent never strains his wits and wiles more, than when his time is thus short. The saint is even stepping into eternity, and now he treads upon his heel, which if he cannot trip up, so as to hinder his arrival in heaven, yet at least to bruise it, that he may go with more pain thither.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Satan's Subtilty in managing his Temptations, where several Stratagems used by him to deceive the Christian are laid down.

2. THE second way wherein satan shews his tempting subtilty, is, in those stratagems he useth to deceive the Christian in the act of temptation.

First, He hangs out false colours, and comes up to the Christian in the disguise of a friend, so that the gates are open to him, and his motions received with applause, before either be discovered; therefore he is said to *transform himself into an angel of light*, 2 Cor. xi. 14. Of all plots 'tis most dangerous when he appears in Samuel's mantle, and silvers his foul tongue with fair language. Thus in point of error, he corrupts some in their judgment, by commending his notions for special gospel-truths, and, like a cunning chapman, puts off his old ware (errors I mean that have laid long upon his hand), only turning them a little after the mode of the times, and they go for new light; under the skirt of Christian liberty, he conveys in libertinism; by crying up the spirit, he decries and vilifies the scripture; by magnifying faith, he labours to undermine repentance, and blow up good works; by bewailing the corruption of the church in its administration, he draws unstable souls from it, and amuseth them, till at last they fall into a *vertigo*, and can see no church at all in being. And he prevails no less on the hearts and lives of man by this wile, than on their judgments. Under the notion of zeal, he kindles sometimes a dangerous flame of passion and wrath in the heart, which, like a rash fire, makes the Christian's spirit boil over into unchristian desires of, and prayers for revenge, where he should forgive, of which we have an instance in the disciples, Luke ix. 55. where two holy men are desiring that *fire may come down from heaven.* Little did they think from whence they had their coal that did so heat them, till Christ told them, *Ye know not what spirit ye are of.* Sometimes he pretends pity and natural affection, which in some cases may be good counsel, and all the while he desires to promote cowardice and sinful self-love, whereby the Christian may be brought to fly from his colours, shrink from the truth, or decline some necessary duty of his calling: this his wile Christ soon spied, when he got Peter to be his spokesman, saying, *Master, pity thyself;* who stopt his mouth with that sharp rebuke, *Get thee behind me, Satan.* O what need have we to study the scriptures, our hearts, and satan's wiles, that we may not bid this enemy welcome, and all the while think it is Christ that is our guest!

A second

A second policy he useth is, to get intelligence of the saints affairs. This is one great wheel in the politician's clock, to have spies in all places, by whom they are acquainted with the counsels and motions of their enemies, and this gives them advantage, as to disappoint their designs, so more safely to compass their own. 'Tis no hard matter for him to play his game well that sees his enemy's hand. David knew how the squares went at court, Jonathan's arrows carried him the news, and accordingly he removed his quarters, and was too hard for his great enemy Saul. Satan is the greatest intelligencer in the world: he makes it his business to inquire into the inclinations, thoughts, affections, purposes of the creature, that finding which humour abounds, he may apply himself accordingly—which way the stream goes, that he may open the passage of temptation, and cut the channel to the fall of the creature's affections, and not force it against the torrent of nature. Now if we consider but the piercing apprehension of the angelic nature, how quick he is to take the scent which way the game goes, by a word dropt, the cast of an eye, or such a small matter (signal enough to give him the alarm); his experience in heart-anatomy, having inspected and (as it were) dissected so many in his long practice, whereby his knowledge is much perfected; as also his great diligence to add to both these, being as close a student as ever, considering the saints, and studying how he may do them a mischief, as we see in Job's case, whom he had so well observed, that he was able to give an answer at once to God, what Job's state and present posture was, and what might be the most probable means of obtaining his will of him; and besides all this, the correspondence that he hath with those in and about the Christian; from whom he learns much of his state, as David by Hushai in Absalom's council: All these considered, 'tis almost impossible for the creature to stir out of the closet of his heart, but it will be known whither he inclines; some corrupt passion or other will bewray the soul to him, as they did David to Saul, who told him where he might find him, *in the wilderness of Engedi*, 1 Sam. xxiv. 1. Thus will these give intelligence to satan, and say, If thou wouldst supply such a one, he is gone that way; you shall have him in the wood of worldly employments, over head and ears in the desires and cares of this life; see where another sits under such a bower, delighting himself in this child, or that gift, endowment of mind, or the like; lay but the lime-twig there, and you shall soon have him in it. Now satan having this intelligence, let him alone to act his part; he sure cannot be at a loss himself, when his scholars (the Jesuits I mean) have such agility of mind, to wreath and cast themselves into any form becoming the persons they would seduce. Is ambition the lust the heart favours? O the

pleasing

pleasing projects that he will put such upon! How easily, having first blown them up with vain hopes, doth he draw them into horrid sins? Thus Haman, that he may have a monopoly of his Prince's favour, is hurried into that bloody plot (fatal at last to himself) against the Jews. Is uncleanness the lust after which the creature's eye wanders? Now he will be the pander, to bring him and his minion together. Thus he finding Amnon sick of this disease, sends Jonadab, *a deep-pated fellow*, 2 Sam. xiii. 3. to put this fine device into his head, of feigning himself sick, whereby his sister fell into his snare.

Thirdly, In his gradual approaches to the soul. When he comes to tempt, he is modest, and asks but a little; he knows he may get that at many times, which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming in a body should be shut out; and therefore that he may beget no suspicion, he presents, may be, a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of this plot; these, like scouts, go before, while his whole body lies hid, as it were, in some swamp at hand. Thus he wriggled into Eve's bosom, whom he doth not at first dare bid take and eat; no, he is more mannerly than so; this would have been so hideous, that as the fish with some sudden noise, by a stone cast into the river, is scared from the bait, so would she have been affrighted from holding parley with such a one; no, he propounds a question which shall make way for this, *Hath God said?* Art not mistaken? Could this be his meaning whose bounty lets thee eat of the rest, to deny thee the best of all? Thus he digs about, and loosens the roots of her faith, and then the tree falls the easier the next gust of temptation. This is a dangerous policy indeed! Many have yielded to go a mile with satan, that never intended to go two; but when once on the way, have been allured further and further, till at last they know not how to leave his company. Thus satan leads poor creatures down into the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going: First, he presents an object that occasions some thoughts, these set fire on the affections, and these fume up into the brain, and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, now satan dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it would even now have denied. Many who at this day lie in open prophaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession; but satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christians, give not place to satan, no not an inch in his first motions; he that is a beggar, and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in; yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if that be not mended by timely repentance.

The

The fourth way, wherein satan shews his subtilty in managing his temptations, is in his reserves. A wise captain hath ever some fresh troops at hand to fall in at a pinch, when the others are worsted. Satan is seldom at a loss in this respect; when one temptation is beat back, he soon hath another to fill up the gap, and make good the line. Thus he tempts Christ to diffidence and distrust, by bidding him turn stones into bread, as if it were time now to carve for himself, being so long neglected of his Father, as to fast forty days, and no supplies heard of; no sooner had Christ quenched this dart with that, *It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,* Matth. iv. 4, 5. but he had another on the string which he let fly at him, tempting him to presumption, v. 5. *Then the devil taketh and sets him on a pinnacle,* and bids, *Cast thyself down headlong, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee, &c.* As if he had said, If thou hast such confidence on God and his word as thou pretendest, shew it by casting thyself down, for thou hast a word between thee and the ground, if thou darest trust God: And truly, though Christ had his answer ready, and was prepared to receive his charge on the right hand and on the left, being so completely armed, that no temptation could come amiss; yet note we, satan's temptations on Christ were like the serpent's motion on a rock (of which Solomon speaks), that leaves no impression, no dent at all, Prov. xxx. 19. But on us they are as a serpent on sand or dust, that leaves a print, when not in the heart, yet in the fancy, colours that which is next door to it, and so the object there is ready to slip in, if great care be not observed, especially when he doth thus change his hand, as when we have resisted one way, fall on afresh another, yea, plant his succeeding temptation upon our very resistance in the former. Now it requires some readiness in our postures, and skill at our weapons, to make our defence; like a disputant, when he is put out of his road, and hath a new question started, or argument unusual brought, now he is tried to purpose. And truly this is satan's way; when he tempts the Christian to neglect of the duty of God's worship (from his worldly occasions, the multitude of them, or necessity of following them), and this takes not, then he is on the other side, and is drawing the Christian to the neglect of his worldly calling, out of a seeming zeal to promote his other in the worship of God. Or first, he comes and labours to deaden the heart in duty; but the Christian is too watchful for him there: then he is puffing of him up with an opinion of his enlargement in it, and ever he keeps his sliest and most sublimated temptations for the last.

Fifthly, In his politic retreats. You shall have an enemy flee as overcome, when it is on a design of overcoming; this was Jo-

shua's wife, by which he catched the men of Ai in a trap, Josh. iii. 1. We read not only of satan's being cast out, but of the *unclean spirit's going out* (voluntarily), yet with a purpose to come again, and bring worse company with him, Matt. xii. 43. Satan is not always beat back by the dint and power of conquering grace, but sometimes he draws off, and raiseth his own siege, the more handsomely to get the Christian out of his fastnesses and trenches, that so he may snap him on the plains, whom he cannot come at in his works and fortifications. Temptations send the saint to his castle, as the sight of the dog doth the coney to her burrow: Now the soul walks the rounds, stands upon its guard, dares not neglect duty, because the enemy is under its very walls, shooting in his temptations continually; but when satan seems to give the soul over, and the Christian finds he is not haunted with such motions as formerly, truly now he is prone to remit in his diligence, fail in his duty, and grow either unfrequent or formal therein; as the Romans, whose valour decayed for want of the Carthaginian troops to alarm them. Let satan tempt, or not tempt, assault, or retreat, keep thou in order, stand in a fighting posture; let his flight strengthen thy faith, but not weaken thy care. The Parthians do their enemies most hurt in their flight, shooting their darts as they run; and so may satan do thee, if thy seeming victory makes thee secure.

CHAP. III.

Of Satan's Subtilty in choosing Instruments fit for his Turn to carry on his tempting Design.

3. THE third particular in which satan shews his subtilty, as a tempter, is in the choice of those instruments whom he useth for the carrying on this his design: he as the master-workman cuts out the temptation, and gives it the shape, but sometimes he hath his journeymen to make it up; he knows his work may be carried on better by others, when he appears not above-board himself. Indeed there is not such a suitableness between the angelical nature and man's, as there is between one man and another; and therefore he cannot make his approaches so familiarly to us, as man can do to man; and here (as in other things) he is God's ape. You know this very reason was given why the Israelites desired God might not speak to them, but Moses, and God liked the motion; *They have well said*, saith God, *I will raise up a Prophet from the midst of them like unto thee*, Deut. xviii. 17. Thus satan, he useth the ministry of men like ourselves,

selves, by which, as he becomes more familiar, so he is less suspected, while, Joab like, he gets another to do his errand. Now 'tis not any will serve his turn for this employment, he is very choice in his instruments he pitcheth on: 'Tis not every soldier is fit for an embassage to treat with an enemy, to betray a town, and the like. Satan considers who can do his work to his greatest advantage; and in this he is unlike God, who is not at all choice in his instruments, because he needs none, and is able to do as well with one as another; but satan's power being finite, he must patch up the defect of the lion's skin with the fox's. Now the persons satan aims at for his instruments, are chiefly of four sorts.

First, Persons of place and power. Secondly, Persons of parts and policy. Thirdly, Persons of holiness, or at least reputed so. Fourthly, Persons of relation and interest.

First, Satan makes choice of persons of place and power. These are either in the commonwealth or church: if he can, he will secure the throne and the pulpit, as the two forts that command the whole line. First, Men of power in the commonwealth; 'tis his old trick to be tampering with such. A Prince, a Ruler, may stand for a thousand; therefore saith Paul to Elymas, when he would have turned the deputy from the faith: *O full of all subtilty, thou child of the devil!* Acts xiii. 8. As if he had said, you have learnt this of your father the devil, to haunt the courts of Princes, wind into the favour of great ones. There is double policy satan hath, in gaining such to his side. First, none have such advantage to draw others to their way; corrupt the captain, and it is hard if he bring none of his troop with him. When the princes, men of renown in their tribes, stood with Corah, Numb. xvi. 2, 10. presently a multitude are drawn into the conspiracy. Let Jeroboam set up idolatry, and Israel is soon in a snare; it is said the people *willingly walked after his commandment*, Hos. v. 11. Secondly, should the sin stay at court, and the infection go no further, yet the sin of such a one (though a good man) may cost a whole kingdom dear, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. *Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number the people.* He owed Israel spite, and he pays them home in their King's sin, which dropt in a fearful plague upon their heads. Secondly, such as are in place and office in the church. No such way to infect the whole town, as to poison the cistern at which they draw their water. Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go to *Ramoth-Gilead* and fall? Satan can tell: *I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of his prophets*, 2 Kings xxii. 21. How shall the prophane be hardened in their sins? Let the preachers sew pillows under their elbows, and cry peace, peace, and it is done. How may the worship of God come to be neglected? Let Hophni and Phineas be but scandalous in their lives, and many both good and bad will *abhor the sacrifice of the Lord.*

Secondly, He employeth persons of parts and policy: if any hath more pregnancy of wit, and depth of reason than others, he is the man satan looks upon for his service; and so far he prevails, that very few of this rank are found amongst Christ's disciples, *Not many wise*. Indeed God will not have his kingdom, either in the heart, or in the world, maintained by carnal policy; 'tis a gospel command, that we walk in godly simplicity, *sine plicis*; though the serpent can shrink up into his folds, and appear what he is not, yet it doth not become the saints to juggle or shuffle with God or men; and truly when any of them made use of the serpent's subtilty, it hath not followed their hand; Jacob got the blessing by a wile, but he might have had it cheaper with plain dealing. Abraham and Sarah both dissemble to Abimelech; God discovers their sin, and reproves them for it by the mouth of an heathen. Asa out of state-policy joins league with Syria, yea, pawns the vessels of the sanctuary, and all for help, and what comes of all this? *Herein thou hast done foolishly*, saith God, *from henceforth thou shalt have wars*. Sinful policy shall not long thrive in the saint's hands well; but satan will not go out of his way, he enquires for the subtilest-pated men, a Balaam, Ahitophel, Aaman, Sanballat, men admired for their counsel and deep plots, these are for his turn. A wicked cause needs a smooth orator, bad ware a pleasing chapman; as in particular, his instruments he useth to seduce and corrupt the minds of men, are commonly subtile-pated fellows, such, *that, if it were possible, would deceive the very elect*. This made the apostle so jealous of the Corinthians, whom he had espoused to Christ, lest, as Eve by the serpent, so their *minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*. He must be a cunning devil indeed, that can draw off the spouse's love from her beloved, yet there is such a witchery in satan's instruments, that many have been brought to fly in the face of those truths and ordinances, yea, Christ himself, to whom they have seemed espoused formerly. Now in three particulars, this sort of satan's instruments shews their master's subtilty.

First, In aspersing the good name of the sincere messengers of Christ, satan's old trick, to raise his credit upon the ruined reputation of Christ's faithful servants. Thus he taught Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, to charge Moses and Aaron, *Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation is holy*, Numb. xvi. 3, 16. They would make the people believe, that it was the pride of their heart, to claim a monopoly to themselves, as if none but Aaron and his fraternity were holy enough to offer incense, and by this subtile practice, they seduced (for a while) in a manner the whole congregation to their side. So the lying prophets (that were satan's knights of the post to Ahab) fell foul on good Micaiah.

cash. Our Saviour himself was no better handled by the Pharisees and their confederates; and Paul, the chief of the apostles, his ministry undermined, and his reputation blasted by false teachers, as if he had been some weak sorry preacher, 2 Cor. x 10. *His bodily presence is weak*, say they, *and his speech contemptible;* and is this your admired man?

Secondly, In covering their impostures and errors with choice notions, and excellent truths. Arius himself, and other dangerous instruments of satan, were too wise to stuff their discourses with nothing but heterodox matter; precious truths dropt from them, with which they sprinkled their corrupt principles, yet with such art as should not easily be discerned. This (as one observes) our Saviour warns his disciples of, when he bids them *beware of the leaven of the Pharisees* (that is, of their errors.) But why leaven? For the secret mixture of it with the wholesome bread; you do not make your bread all of leaven, none would then eat it, but crumble a little of it into a whole batch, which sours all. Thus Christ doth tell the disciples, that the Pharisees among many truths mixed their errors, and therefore it behoves them to beware, lest, with the truth, the error goes down also. Again, leaven is very like the dough, of the same grain with it, only differs in age and sourness: thus Christ intimates the resemblance of their errors to the truth, scraped, as it were, out of the scriptures, but soured with their false glosses. This indeed makes it easy for Christ's sheep to be infected with the scab of error, because that weed which breeds the rot is so like the grace that nourisheth them.

Thirdly, Their subtilty appears in holding forth such principles as are indulgent to the flesh. This brings in whole shoals of silly souls into their net, the heart of man loves a life to shape a religion according to his own humour, and is easy to believe that to be a truth which favours its own inclination. Now there are three lusts that satan's instruments labour to gratify in their doctrine. Carnal reason, pride, and fleshly liberty.

First, Carnal reason; this is the great idol which the more intelligent part of the world worship, making it the very standard of their faith, and from this bitter root have sprung those Arian and Socinian heresies. And truly he that will go no further than reason will carry him, may hold out in the plain way of the moral law, but when he comes to the depths of the gospel, must either go back, or be content that faith shall help reason over.

Secondly, Another lust that satan cockers, Pride. Man naturally would be a God to himself (though by clambering so high he got his fall); and whatever doctrine nourisheth a good opinion of man in his own eye, this is acceptable to him, and this hath spawned another fry of dangerous errors. The Pelagian

and Semi-Pelagian, which set nature upon its own legs, and persuade man he can go alone to Christ, or at least with a little external help, of an hand to lead, or argument to excite, without any creating work in the soul. O, we cannot conceive how glib such stuff goes down! If one workman should tell you that your house is rotten, and must be pulled down, and all new materials prepared; and another should say no such matter, such a beam is good, and such a spar may stand, a little cost will serve the turn; it were no wonder that you should listen to him that would put you to the least cost and trouble: The faithful servants of Christ tell sinners from the word, that man in his natural state is corrupt and rotten, that nothing of the old frame will serve, and there must needs be all new; but in comes the Arminian, and blows up the sinner's pride, and tells him he is not so weak or wicked as the other represents him; if thou wilt, thou mayest repent and believe, or at least, by exerting thy natural abilities, oblige God to superadd what thou hast not. This is the workman that will please proud men best.

Thirdly, Satan by his instruments nourisheth that desire of fleshly liberty, which is in man by nature, who is a son of Belial, without yoke; and if he must wear any, that will please best which hath the softest lining, and pincheth the flesh least; and therefore when the sincere teachers of the word will not abate the strictness of the command, but press sincere obedience to it, then come satan's instruments and say, These are hard task-masters, who will not allow one play-day in a year to the Christian, but tie him to continual duty, we will shew you an easier way to heaven: Come, saith the Papist, confess but once a year to the priest (pay him well for his pains), and be an obedient son of the church, and we will dispense with all the rest. Come, saith the Familist, the gospel-charter allows more liberty than these legal preachers tell you of; they bid you repent and believe; when Christ hath done all these to your hand, what have you left to do but to nourish the flesh? Something sure is in it, that impostors find such quick return for their ware, while truth hangs upon the log; and is it not this? that they are content to afford heaven cheaper to their disciples, than Christ will to his. He that sells cheapest shall have the most customers, though at last best will be best cheap: Truth with self-denial, a better pennyworth, than error with all its flesh-pleasing.

Fourthly, Satan makes choice of such as have a great name for holiness; none like a live bird to draw other birds into the net; but is it possible that such should do this work for the devil? Yes, such is the policy of satan, and the frailty of the best, that the most holy men have been his instruments to seduce others. Abraham, he tempts his wife to lie, *Say thou art my sister*. The old prophet

prophet leads the man of God out of his way, 1 Kings xiii. The holiness of the man, and the reverence of his age, 'tis like, gave authority to his counsel. O how should this make you watchful, whose long travel and great progress in the ways of God have gained you a name of eminency in the church, what you say, do, or hold, because you are file-leading men, and others look more on you than their way!

Fifthly, Satan chooseth such, as by relation or affection have deep interest in the persons he would gain. Some will kiss the child for the nurse's sake, and like the present for the hand that brings it. 'Tis likely David would not have received that from Nabal, which he took from Abigail, and thanked her. Satan sent the apple by Eve's hand to Adam. Dalilah doth more with Samson, than all the Philistines' bands. Job's wife brings him the poison, *Curse God, and die.* Some think satan spared her life, when he slew his children and servants (though she was also within his commission), as the most likely instrument, by reason of her relation and his affection, to lead him into temptation. Satan employs Peter the disciple to tempt Christ; at another time his friends and kinsfolk. Some martyrs have confessed, the hardest work they met withal, was to overcome the prayers and tears of their friends and relations; Paul himself could not get off this snare without heart-breaking, *What, mean you to weep, and to break my heart?* Acts xxi. 13.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein this Point of Satan's Subtilty, as a Tempter to Sin, is briefly applied.

Use 1. FIRST, Affect not sinful policy and subtilty, it makes you but like the devil. There is the wisdom of the serpent, which is commended, and that is his perfection as a creature, in which both the literal and the mystical excel, the one in an ingenious observing nature, above the beasts of the field; and the other, knowledge above other men; but as the subtilty of the one, and knowledge of the other is degenerate, and makes them more able to do mischief, the one to the bodies, the other to the souls of men, this kind of wisdom and subtilty is to be abhorred by us: *The serpent's eye* (as one saith) *does dwell only in the dove's head.*

First, Affect not subtilty in contriving any sin. Some are *wise to do evil*, Jer. iv. 22. Masters of this craft, who can, as they lie on their beds, cast their wicked designs into an artificial me-

thod, shewing a kind of devilish wit therein, as the Egyptians, who dealt wisely (as they thought) with the Israelites, and Jezebel, who had printed her bloody design in so fair a letter, that some might read her saint, while she was playing the devil. This is the black art indeed, and will make the soul as black as hell that practiseth it. It is not hard for any (though a fool) to learn. Be but wicked, and the devil will help thee to be witty: Come but a while to his school, and thou mayest soon be a cunning man. No sins speak a higher attainment in wickedness, than those which are the result of deliberate counsel and deep plottings. Creatures as they go longer with their young, so their birth is more strong and perfect; as the elephant above all others. The longer a sin is a-forming and forging within, and the oftner the head and heart meet about it, the completer the sin. Here are many litters of unformed sin in one; such I mean, that are conceived and cast forth in the hurry of an extemporary passion; such sudden acts shew weakness, these other deep wickedness.

Secondly, Take heed of hiding sin when thou hast committed it. This is one of the devices that are in man's heart, and as much art and cunning is shewn in this, as in any one part of the sinner's trade. What a trick had the patriarchs to blind their father's eye with a bloody coat? Joseph's mistress, to prevent a charge from Joseph, accuseth him for what she is guilty, like the robber who escaped by crying out *Stop the thief.* God taught man to make coats to cover his naked body, but the devil learned him to weave these coverings to hide the nakedness of his soul; the more subtile thou seemest in concealing thy sin, the more egregiously thou playest the fool. None so ashamed as the liar when found out, and that thou art sure to be. Thy covering is too short to hide thee from God's eye, and what God sees (if thou dost not put thyself to shame), he will tell all the world of hereafter, however thou escapest in this life.

Thirdly, Take heed of subtilty and sinful policy, in compassing that which is lawful in itself: 'Tis lawful to improve thy estate, and husband it well for thy posterity; but take not the devil's counsel, who will be putting thee upon some tricks in thy trade, and slights in thy dealing; such may go for wise men a while, but the prophet reads their destinies, Jer. xvi. 11. *At his end he shall be a fool.* 'Tis lawful to love our estate, life, liberty; but beware of sinful policy to save them. 'Tis no wisdom to shuffle with God, by denying his truth, or shifting off our duty to keep correspondence with men; he is a weak fencer that lays his soul at open guard to be stabbed and wounded with guilt, while he is lifting up his hands to save a broken head. Our fear commonly meets us at that door by which we think to run from it. *He that will save his life shall lose it.* As you love your peace,

peace, Christians, be plainhearted with God and man, and keep the King's highway; go the plain way of the command to obtain thy desire, and not leap over hedge and ditch to come a little sooner to the journey's end; such commonly either meet with some stop, that makes them come back with shame, or else put to venture their necks in some desperate leap. He is sure to come safer (if not sooner) home, that is willing to go a little about to keep God company. The historian's observation is worth the Christian's remembrance: *Consilia callida prima specie læta, tractatu dura, eventu tristia*, Liv. Crafty counsels promise fair at first, but prove more difficult in the managing, and in the end do pay the undertaker home with desperate sorrow.

Use 2. Is Satan so subtile? O then think not to be too cunning for the devil; he will be too hard for thee at last; sin not with thoughts of an after repentance; it is possible thou meanest this at present: but dost thou think, who sits down to play with this cheater, to draw out thy stock when thou pleasest? Alas, poor wretch, he has a thousand devices to carry thee on, and engage thee deeper, till he hath not left thee any tenderness in thy conscience! As some have been served at play, intending only to venture a shilling or two, yet have, by the secret witchery of gaming, played the very clothes off their back before they had done! O how many have thus sinned away all their principles, yea, profession itself, that they have not so much as this cloak left, but walk naked to their shame! Like children who get into a boat, think to play near the shore, but are unawares by a violent gust carried down to the wide sea. O how know you, that dally with satan, but that at last you may (who begin modestly) be carried down to the broad sea of prophaneness? Some men are so subtile to over-reach, and so cruel when they get men into their hand, that a man had better beg his bread than borrow of them. Such a merchant is satan, cunning to insinuate, and get the creature into his books, and when he hath him on the hip, no more mercy to be had at his hand, than the lamb may expect from the ravenous wolf.

Use 3. Study his wiles, and acquaint thyself with satan's policy. Paul takes it for granted, that every saint doth in the same measure understand them; *We are not ignorant of his devices*, 2 Cor. ii. 11. He is but an ill fencer that knows nothing of his enemy's play; many particular stratagems I have laid down already which may help a little; and for thy direction in this study of, and inquiry into satan's wiles, take this threefold counsel.

First, Take God into thy counsel: heaven overlooks hell. God at any time can tell thee, what plots are hatching there against thee. Consider satan, as he is God's creature, so God cannot but know him. He that makes the watch, knows every pin in it.

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He formed this crooked serpent, though not the crookedness of this serpent; and though satan's way of tempting be as wonderful as the way of a serpent on a rock, yet God traceth him; yea, knows all his thoughts together. *Hell itself is naked before him*, and the destroyer hath no covering. Again, consider him as God's prisoner, who hath him fast in chains; and so the Lord, who is his keeper, must needs know whither his prisoner goes, who cannot stir without his leave. Lastly, consider him as his messenger; for so he is. *An evil spirit from the Lord vexed Saul;* and he that gives him his errand, is able to tell thee what it is. Go then and plow with God's heifer; improve thy interest in Christ, who knows what his Father knows, and is ready to reveal all that concerns thee to thee, John xv. 15. It was he who described the devil coming against Peter and the rest of the apostles, and faithfully revealed it to them, Luke xxii. before they thought of any such matter. Through Christ's hands pass all that is transacted in heaven and hell. We live in days of great actions, deep counsels, and plots on all sides, and only a few that stand on the upper end of the world know these mysteries of state; all the rest know little more than pamphlet intelligence: Thus it is in regard of those plots which satan in his infernal conclave is laying against the souls of men; they are but a few that know any thing to purpose of satan's designs against them; and those are the saints from whom God cannot hide his own counsels of love, but sends his spirit to reveal unto them here, what he hath prepared for them in heaven, 1 Cor. ii. 10. and therefore much less will he conceal any destructive plot of satan from them.

Secondly, Be intimately acquainted with thine own heart, and thou wilt the better know his design against thee, who takes his method of tempting from the inclination and posture of thy heart. As a general walks about the city, and views it well, and then raiseth his batteries, where he hath the greatest advantage: so doth satan compass, and consider the Christian in every part before he tempts.

Lastly, Be careful to read the word of God with observation. In it thou hast the history of the most remarkable battles that have been fought by the most eminent worthies in Christ's army of saints, with the great warrior satan: Here thou mayest see how satan hath foiled them, and how they have recovered their lost ground. Here you have his cabinet-counsels opened. There is not a lust which you are in danger of, but you have it described, not a temptation which the word doth not arm you against. It is reported that a certain Jew should have poisoned Luther, but was happily prevented by his picture that was sent to Luther, with a warning from a faithful friend to take heed of such a man when he saw him, by which he knew the murderer, and escaped

his

his hands. The word shews thee, O Christian, the face of those lusts, which satan employs to butcher thy precious soul; *By them is thy servant warned*, saith David, Psal. xix. 11.

CHAP. V.

Wherein is shewed the Subtilty of Satan, as a Troubler, and an Accuser for Sin: where many of his Wiles and Policies to disquiet the Saints' Spirits are discovered.

THE second general in which satan appears such a subtile enemy, is, in molesting the saint's peace, and disquieting the saint's spirit. As the Holy Spirit's work is not only to be a sanctifier, but also a comforter, whose fruits are righteousness and peace; so the evil spirit, satan, is both a seducer unto sin, and an accuser for sin, a tempter and a troubler, and indeed in the same order. As the Holy Ghost is first a sanctifier, and then a comforter; so satan first a tempter, then a troubler. Joseph's mistress first tries to draw him to gratify her lust; that string breaking, she had another to trounce him and charge him; and for a plea, she hath his coat to cover her malice, nor is it hard for satan to pick some hole in the saint's coat, even when he walks most circumspectly. The proper seat of sin is the will; of comfort, the conscience; Satan hath not absolute knowledge of or power over these (being locked up from any other but God), and therefore what he doth, either in defiling temptations, or disquieting, is by wiles more than by open force, and he is not inferior in troubling, to himself in tempting. Satan hath, as the serpent, a way by himself; other beasts, their motion is direct, right on, but the serpent goes askew (as we say), so winding and wreathing its body, that when you see a serpent creeping along, you can hardly discern which way it tends; thus satan in his vexing temptations hath many intricate policies, turning this way and that way, the better to conceal his designs from the saint, which will appear in these following methods.

SECT. I.—First, He vexeth the Christian by laying his brats at the saint's door, and charging him with that which is his own creature; and here he hath such a notable art, that many dear saints of God are wofully hampered, and dejected, as if they were the vilest blasphemers, and veriest atheists in the world; whereas indeed the cup is of his own putting into the sack, but so slily conveyed into the saint's bosom, that the Christian, though amazed and affrighted at the sight of them, yet being jealous of his own heart, and unacquainted with satan's tricks of this kind, cannot

cannot conceive how such motions should come there (if not bred in, and vomited out by his own naughty heart), and so bears the blame of the sin himself, because he cannot find the right father, mourning as one that is forlorn and cast off by God, or else (saith he) I should never have such vermin of hell creeping in my bosom: and here satan hath the end he proposeth; for he is not so silly as to hope he should have welcome with such a horrid crew of blasphemous and atheistical thoughts, in that soul, where he hath been denied when he came in an enticing way; no, but his design is by way of revenge, because the soul will not prostitute itself to his lust otherways, therefore to haunt it and scare it with those imps of blasphemy. As he served Luther, to whom he appeared, and when repulsed by him went away, and left a noisome stench behind him in the room. Thus when the Christian had worsted satan in his more pleasing temptations, being maddened, he belched forth his stench of blasphemous motions to annoy and affright him, that from them the Christian may draw some sad conclusion or other; and indeed the Christian's sin lies commonly more in the conclusion which he draws from them (as that he is not a child of God), than in the motions themselves. All the counsel therefore I shall give thee in this case, is to do with these motions, as you use to serve those vagrants and rogues that come about the country; whom, though you cannot keep from passing through the town, yet you look they settle not there, but whip them and send them to their own home. Thus give these motions the law, in mourning for them, resisting of them, and they shall not be your charge (yea, 'tis like you shall seldomer be troubled with such guests); but if once you come to entertain them, and be satan's nurse to them, then the law of God will cast them upon you.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Another wile of satan, as a troubler, is in aggravating the saint's sins (against which he hath a notable declamatory faculty), not that he hates the sin, but the saint; now in this, his chief subtilty is so to lay his charge, that it may seem to be the act of the Holy Spirit; he knows an arrow out of God's quiver wounds deep; and therefore when he accuseth, he comes in God's name; as suppose a child were conscious to himself of displeasing his father, and one that owes him a spite (to trouble him) should counterfeit a letter from his father, and cunningly convey it into the son's hand, who receives it as from his father, wherein he chargeth him with many heavy crimes, disowns him, and threatens he shall never come in his sight, or have a penny portion from him; the poor son (conscious to himself of many undutiful carriages, and not knowing the plot) takes on heavily, and can neither eat nor sleep for grief; here is a real trouble begot from a false and imaginary ground: Thus satan observes

serves how the squares go between God and his children; such a saint he sees tardy in his duty, faulty in that service, and he knows the Christian is conscious of this, and that the spirit of God will also shew his distaste for these, both which prompt satan to draw a charge at length, raking up all the bloody aggravations he can think of, and giving it in to the saint as sent from God. Thus he taught Job's friends to pick up those infirmities, which dropt from him in his distress, and shoot them back in his face, as if indeed they had been sent from God to declare him an hypocrite, and denounce his wrath for the same.

Quest. *But how should we know the false accusations of satan from the rebukes of God and his spirit?*

Answ. First, If they cross any former act or work of the spirit in thy soul, they are satan's, and not the Holy Spirit's. Now you shall observe, satan's scope in accusing the Christian, and aggravating his sin, is to unsaint him, and persuade him he is but an hypocrite. O, saith satan, now thou hast shewn what thou art, see what a spot is on thy coat, this is not the spot of a child; who ever, that was a saint, committed such a sin after such a sort? All thy comforts and confidence which thou hast bragged of, were false, I warrant you. Thus you see satan at one blow dasheth all in pieces. The whole fabrick of grace, which God hath been rearing up many years in the soul, must now, at one puff of his malicious mouth, be blown down, and all the sweet comforts with which the Holy Ghost hath sealed up God's love, must be defaced with this one blot, which satan draws over the fair copy of the saint's evidence. Well, soul, for thy comfort know, if ever the spirit of God hath begun a sanctifying or comforting work, causing thee to hope in his mercy, he never is, will, or can be the messenger to bring contrary news to thy soul; his language is not yea and nay, but yea, and amen for ever. Indeed when the saint plays the wanton, he can chide, yea, will frown, and tell the soul roundly of its sin, as he did David by Nathan: *Thou art the man,* this thou hast done, and paints out his sin with such bloody colours, as made David's heart melt, as it were into so many drops of water; but that shall not serve his turn; he tells him what a rod is steeping for him (that shall smart to purpose); one of his own house, no other than his darling son, shall rise up against him, a child, a saint, when he shall know what it is to have his beloved child traitorously invade his crown, and unnaturally hunt for his precious life: yet not a word all this while is heard from Nathan teaching David to unsaint himself, and call in question the work of God in his soul. No, he hath no such commission from God, he was sent to make him mourn for his sin, not from his sin to question his state, which God had so oft put out of doubt.

Secondly,

Secondly, When they asperse the riches of God's grace, and so charge the Christian, that withal they reflect upon the good name of God, then they are not of the Holy Spirit, but from satan. When you find your sins so represented and aggravated to you, as exceeding either the mercy of God's nature, or the grace of his covenant, *Hic se aperit diabolus;* this comes from the foul liar. The Holy Spirit is Christ's spokesman to commend him to souls, and to woo sinners to embrace the grace of the gospel; and can such words drop from these sacred lips, as should break the match, and sink Christ's esteem in the thoughts of the creature? You may know where this was minted. When you hear one commend another for a wise and good man, and at last come in with a *but* that dasheth all, you will easily think he is no friend to the man, but some sly enemy, that by seeming to commend, desires to disgrace the more: Thus when you find God represented to you as merciful and gracious, but not to such a great sinner as you; to have power and strength, but not able, to save thee; you may say, Avaunt satan, thy speech bewrayeth thee.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Another wile of satan lies in cavilling at the Christian's duties and performances, by which he puts him to much toil and trouble. He is at the church as soon as thou canst be, Christian, for thy heart; yea, he stands under thy closet-window, and heareth what thou sayest to God in secret, all the while studying how he may commence a suit against thee for thy duty; like those that come to sermons to carp and catch at what the preacher saith, that they may make him an offender for some word or other misplaced: or like a cunning opponent in the schools, while his adversary is busy in reading his position, he is studying to confute it; and truly satan hath such an art at this, that he is able to take our duties in pieces, and so disfigure them that they should appear formal, though never so zealous; hypocritical, though enriched with much sincerity. When thou hast done thy duty, Christian, then stands up this sophister to ravel out thy work; There (will he say) thou playedst the hypocrite, zealous, but serving thyself; here wandering, there nodding; a little farther, puffed up with pride; and what wages canst thou hope for at God's hands, now thou hast spoiled his work, and cut it all out into chips? Thus he makes many poor souls lead a weary life; nothing they do but he hath a fling at, that they know not whether best pray or not, hear or not; and when they have prayed and heard, whether it be to any purpose or not: Thus their souls hang in doubt, and their days pass in sorrow, while their enemy stands in a corner, and laughs at the cheat he hath put upon them; as one, who by putting a counterfeit spider into the dish, makes those that sit at table either out of conceit with the meat, that they dare not eat, or afraid of themselves if they have eaten, lest they should be poisoned with their meat.

Quest.

Quest. But you will say, *What will you have us to do in this case, to withstand the cavils of satan, in reference to our duties?*

Answ. 1. First, Let this make thee more accurate in all thou doest; 'tis the very end God aims at in suffering satan thus to watch you, that you his children might be the more circumspect, because you have one overlooks you, that will be sure to tell tales of you to God, and accuse thee to thy own self. Doth it not behove thee to write thy copy fair, when such a critic reads and scans it over? Doth it not concern thee to know thy heart well, to turn over the scriptures diligently, that thou mayest know the state of thy soul-controversy in all the cases of conscience thereof, when thou hast such a subtile opponent to reply upon thee?

Secondly, Let it make thee more humble. If satan can charge thee with so much in thy best duties, O what then can thy God do? God suffers sometimes the infirmities of his people to be known by the wicked (who are ready to check and frump them for them), for this end, to humble his people; how much more low should these accusations of satan, which are in a great part too true, lay us before God?

Thirdly, Observe the fallacy of satan's argument, which discovered, will help thee to answer his cavil: the fallacy is double.

First, He will persuade thee that thy duty and thyself are hypocritical, proud, formal, &c. because something of these sins are to be found in thy duty: Now, Christian, learn to distinguish between pride in a duty, and a proud duty, hypocrisy in a person, and an hypocrite; wine in a man, and a man in wine. The best of saints have the stirrings of such corruptions in them, and in their services; these birds will light on Abraham's sacrifice; but comfort thyself with this, that if thou findest a party within thy bosom, pleading for God, and entering its protest against these, thou and thy services are evangelically perfect. God beholds these in the weaknesses of thy sickly state here below, and pities thee, as thou wouldst do thy lame child: How odious is he to us that mocks one for natural defects, a blear eye, or a stammering tongue! Such are these in thy new nature. Observable is that in Christ's prayer against satan, Zech. iii. 3. *The Lord said unto satan, The Lord rebuke thee, is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?* As if Christ had said, Lord, wilt thou suffer this envious spirit to vex thy poor child with, and charge him for those infirmities that cleave to his imperfect state? he is but newly plucked out of the fire, no wonder there are some sparks unquenched, some corruption unmortified, some disorders unreformed in his place and calling. And what Christ did for Joshua, he doth incessantly for all his saints, apologizing for their infirmities with his Father.

Secondly, His other fallacy is, in arguing from the sin that is in

in our duties, to the non-acceptance of them. Will God, saith he, thinkest thou, take such broken groats at thy hand? Is he not a holy God? Now here (Christian) learn to distinguish and answer satan. There is a double acceptance. There is an acceptance of a thing by way of payment of debt, and there is an acceptance of a thing offered as a token of love, and testimony of gratitude. He that will not accept of broken money, or half the sum for payment of a debt; the same man, if his friend sends him, though but a bent sixpence, in token of his love, will take it kindly. 'Tis true (Christian) the debt thou owest to God, must be paid in good and lawful money, but (for thy comfort) here Christ is the paymaster; send satan to him, bid him bring his charge against Christ, who is ready at God's right hand to clear his accounts, and shew his discharge for the whole debt; but now thy performances and obedience come under another notion (as tokens of thy love and thankfulness to God), and such is the gracious disposition of thy heavenly Father, that he accepts thy mite: Love refuseth nothing that love sends. 'Tis not the weight or worth of the gift, but *the desire of man is his kindness*, Prov. xix. 22.

SECT. IV.—4. A fourth wile of satan as a troubler, is, to draw the saint into the depths of despair, under a specious pretence of not being humbled enough for sin. This we find singled out by the apostle for one of the devil's fetches, *We are not ignorant* (saith he) *of his devices*, 2 Cor. ii. 11. his sophistical reasonings. Satan sets much by this slight; no weapon oftner in his hand: Where is the Christian that hath not met him at this door? Here satan finds the Christian easy to be wrought on, the humours being stirred to his hand, while the Christian of his own accord complains of the hardness of his heart, and is very prone to believe any who comply with his musing thoughts; yea, thinks every one flatters him, that would persuade him otherwise. 'Tis easier to dye that soul into black, which is of a sad colour already, than to make such a one take the lightsome tincture of joy and comfort.

Quest. *But how shall I answer this subtle enemy, when he thus perplexeth my spirit, with not being humbled enough for sin*, &c.

Answ. I answer as to the former; labour to spy the fallacy of his argument, and his mouth is soon stopt.

First, Satan argues thus: There ought to be a proportion between sin and sorrow; but there is no proportion between thy sins and thy sorrow; therefore thou art not humbled enough. What a plausible argument is here, at first blush? For the major, that there ought to be a proportion between sin and sorrow, this satan will shew you scripture for. Manasseh was a great sinner, and an ordinary sorrow will not serve his turn; *he humbled himself*

self greatly before the Lord, 1 Chron. iii. 12. Now (saith satan) weigh thy sin in the balance with thy sorrow; art thou as great a mourner as thou hast been a sinner? So many years thou hast waged war against the Almighty, making havock of his laws, loading his patience till it groaned again, raking in the sides of Christ with thy bloody dagger (while thou didst grieve his spirit, and reject his grace); and dost thou think a little remorse (like a rolling cloud letting fall a few drops of sorrow) will now be accepted? No, thou must steep in sorrow, as thou hast soaked in sin. Now, to shew you the fallacy, we must distinguish of a two-fold proportion of sorrow.

First, An exact proportion of sorrow to the inherent nature and demerit of sin.

Secondly, There is a proportion to the law and rule of the gospel. Now the first is not a thing feasible, because the injury done in the least sin is infinite, because done to an infinite God; and if it could be feasible, yet according to the tenour of the first covenant, it would not be acceptable; because it had no clause to give any hope for an after-game by repentance; but the other, which is a gospel sorrow, this is indeed *repentance unto life*, Acts v. 31. Zech. xii. 10. (both given by the spirit of the gospel, and to be tried by the rule of the gospel.) This is given for thy relief; as you see sometimes in the high-way (where the waters are too deep for travellers), you have a foot-bridge or causey, by which they may escape the flood, and safely pass on; so that none but such as have not eyes, or are drunk, will venture to go through the waters, when they may avoid the danger. Thou art a dead man, if thou thinkst to answer thy sin with proportionable sorrow; thou wilt soon be above thy depth, and quackle thyself with thy own tears, but never get over the least sin thou commitedst; go not on therefore as thou lovest thyself, but turn aside to this gospel-path, and thou escapest the danger. O you tempted souls, when satan saith you are not humbled enough, see where you may be relieved; *I am a Roman* (saith Paul), *I appeal to Cæsar*. I am a Christian (say), I appeal to Christ's law; and what is the law of the gospel concerning this? Heart-sorrow is gospel-sorrow; *They were pricked in their heart*, Acts i. 37. and Peter (like an honest chirurgeon) will not keep these bleeding patients longer in pain with their wounds open, but presently claps on the healing plaister of the gospel, *Believe in the Lord Jesus*. Now a prick to the heart is more than a wound to the conscience. The heart is the seat of life. Sin wounded there lies a-dying. To do any thing from the heart, makes it acceptable, Eph. vi. 6. 2 Cor. v. 11. Now, poor soul, hadst thou sat thus long in the devil's flocks, if thou hadst understood this aright? Doth thy heart clear or condemn thee when in secret thou

art bemoaning thy sin before God? If thy heart be false. I cannot help you, no not the gospel itself; but if sincere, thou hast boldness with God, 1 John iii. 21.

A second argument satan useth, is this: He whose sorrow falls short of theirs, that never truly repented, he is not humble enough: But, soul, thy sorrow falls short of some, that never truly repented; *Ergo*. Well, the first proposition is true, but how will satan prove his minor? Thus Ahab, he took on for his sin, and went in sackcloth. Judas he made bitter complaint. O (saith satan) didst thou not know such a one that lay under terror of conscience, walking in a sad mournful condition so many months, and every one took him for the greatest convert in the country; and yet he at last fell foully, and proved an apostate; but thou never didst feel such smart, pass so many weary nights and days in mourning and bitter lamentations as he hath done, therefore thou fallest short of one that fell short of repentance. And truly this is a sad stumbling block to a soul in an hour of temptation; like a ship sunk in the mouth of the harbour, which is more dangerous to others than if it had perished in the open sea. There is less scandal by the sins of the wicked, who sink (as it were) in the broad sea of prophaneness, than in those who are convinced of sin, troubled in conscience, and miscarry so near the harbour, within sight, as it were, of saving grace. Tempted souls can hardly get over these without dashing. Am I better than such a one that proved nought at last? Now to help thee a little to find out the fallacy of this argument, we must distinguish between the terrors that accompany sorrow, and the intrinsical nature of his grace. The first which are accessary may be separated from the other, as the raging of the sea, which is caused by the wind upon the sea, when the wind is down. From this distinction take two conclusions.

First, One may fall short of an hypocrite in the terrors that sometimes accompany sorrow, and yet have the truth of this grace, which the other with all his terrors wants. Christians run into many mistakes, by judging rather according to that which is accessary, than that which is essential to the nature of duties and graces. Sometimes thou hearest one pray with a moving expression (whilst thou can hardly get out a few broken words in a duty), and thou art ready to accuse thyself and to admire him; as if the gilt of the key made it open the door the better; thou seest another abound with joy which thou wantest, and art ready to conclude his grace more, and thine less, whereas thou mayest have more real grace, only thou wantest a light to shew thee where it lies. Take heed of judging by accessaries: perhaps thou hast not heard so much of the rattling of the chains of hell, nor in thy conscience the out-cries of the damned, to make thy flesh tremble: but hast thou not seen that in a bleeding Christ which hath made

thy

thy heart melt and mourn, yea, loath and hate thy lusts more than the devil himself? Truly (Christian) 'tis strange to hear a patient complain of the physician, when he finds his physic work effectually, to the evacuating of his distempered humours, and the restoring his health, merely because he was not so sick as some others with the working of it; soul thou hast more reason to be blessing God that the convictions of the spirit wrought so kindly on thee, to effect that in thee, without those terrors, which have cost others so dear.

Secondly, This is so weak an argument, that contrarywise the more the terrors are, the less the sorrow is for sin while they remain: These are indeed preparatory sometimes to sorrow; they go before this grace, as austere John before meek Jesus. But as John went down when Christ went up, his increase was John's decrease; so as true godly sorrow goes up, there terrors go down. As the wind gathers the clouds, but those clouds seldom melt into a set rain, until the wind falls that gathered them: so these terrors raise the clouds of our sins in our consciences, but when these sins melt into godly sorrow, this lays the storm presently; indeed, as the loud winds do blow away the rain, so these terrors do keep off the soul from this gospel sorrow. While the creature is making an outcry, 'tis damned, 'tis damned, it is taken up so much with the fear of hell, that sin as sin (which is the proper object of godly sorrow) is little mourned for. A murderer, condemned to die, is so possest with the fear of death, and thought of the gallows, that there lies the slain body (it may be) before him, unlamented by him; but when his pardon is brought, then he can bestow his tears freely on his murdered friend, *They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn.* Faith is the eye, this eye (beholding its sin piercing Christ, and Christ pardoning its sin) affects the heart, the heart affecting sighs; these inward clouds melt and run from the eye of faith in tears; and all this is done when there is no tempest of terror upon the spirit, but a sweet serenity of love and peace; and therefore, Christian, see how satan abuseth thee, when he would persuade thee thou art not humbled enough, because thy sorrow is not attended with these illegal terrors.

CHAP. VI.

A brief Application of the second Branch of the Point, viz. Of Satan's Subtilty as a Troubler and Accuser for Sin.

Use 1. IS Satan so subtile to trouble the saints' peace? This proves them to be the children of satan, who shew the

same art and subtilty in vexing the spirit of the saints, as doth their infernal father; not to speak of bloody persecutors, who are the devil's slaughter slaves to butcher the saints; but of those who more slily trouble and molest the saints' peace.

First, Such as rake up the saints' old sins, which God hath forgiven and forgotten (merely to grieve their spirits and bespatter their names); these shew their devilish malice indeed, who can take such pains to travel many years back, that they may find a handful of dirt to throw on the saint's face. Thus Shemi twitted David, *Come out, thou bloody man*, 1 Sam. i. 6. 7. When you that fear God meet with such reproaches, answer them as Beza did the Papists, who for want of other matter charged him for some wanton poems penned by him in his youth, *Hi homunciones invident mihi gratiam Dei.* These men, said he, grudge me the pardoning mercy of God.

Secondly, Such as watch for the saints' halting, and catch at every infirmity to make them odious and themselves merry. 'Tis a dreadful curse such bring upon themselves, though they little think of it! no less than Amalek's, the remembrance of whose name God threatened *to blot from under heaven;* why, what had Amalek done to deserve this? They *smote the hindermost, those that were feeble,* Deut. xxv. 19. and could not march with the rest. And was it so great a cruelty to do this? Much more to smite with the edge of a mocking tongue the feeble in grace.

Thirdly, Such as father their sins upon the saints; thus Ahab calls the prophet *the troubler of Israel*, when it was himself and his father's house. What a grief was it, think you, to Moses' spirit, for the Israelites to lay the blood of those that died in the wilderness at his door? Whereas, God knows, he was their constant bail, when at any time God's hand was up to destroy them; and this is the charge which the best of God's servants in this crooked generation of ours lie under: We may thank them, say the prophane, for all our late miseries in the nation: we were well enough till they would reform us. O for shame, blame not the good physic that was administered, but the corrupt body of the nation that could not bear it.

Fourthly, Such as will themselves sin, merely to trouble the saints' spirit; thus, Rabshakeh blasphemed, and when desired to speak in another language, he goes on the more to grieve them. Sometimes you shall have a prophane wretch (knowing one to be conscientious, and cannot brook to hear the name of God taken in vain, or the ways of God flouted) will on purpose fall upon such discourse as shall grate his chaste ears, and trouble his gracious spirit; such a one strikes father and child at one blow, thinks it not enough to dishonour God, except the saint stands by to see and hear the wrong done to his heavenly Father.

Use

Use 2. Secondly, This may afford matter of admiration and thankfulness to any of you, O ye saints, who are not this day under satan's hatches. Is he so subtile to disquiet, and has thou any peace in thy conscience? To whom art thou beholden for that serenity that is on thy spirit? To none but thy God, under whose wing thou sittest so warm and safe. Is there not combustible matter enough in thy conscience for his sparks to kindle? Perhaps thou hast not committed such bloody sins as others: that's not the reason of thy peace, for the least is big enough to damn, much more to trouble thee. Thou hast not grossly fallen (may be) since conversion; that's rare, if thou beest of long standing; yet the ghosts of the unregenerate sins might walk in thy conscience: thou hast had many testimonies of God's favour, hast thou not? Who more than David? Psal. lxxvii. Yet he is at a loss sometimes, learning to spell his evidences, as if he could never have read them. The sense of God's love comes and goes with the present taste. He that is in the dark (while there) sees not the more for former light. O bless God for that light which shines in at the window; satan is plotting to undermine thy comfort every day. This thief sees thy pleasant fruits as they hang, and his teeth water at them, but the wall is too high for him to climb; thy God keeps this serpent out of thy paradise. 'Tis not the grace of God in thee, but the favour of God as a shield about thee, defends thee from the wicked one.

Use 3. Thirdly, Let satan's subtilty, to molest your peace, make thee, O Christian, more wise and wary: thou hast not a fool to deal with, but one that hath wit enough to spill thy comfort, and spoil thy joy, if not narrowly watched: This is the dainty bit he gapes for; 'tis not harder to keep the flies out of your cupboards in summer from tainting your provision, than satan out of your consciences: many a sweet meal hath he robbed the saints of, and sent them supperless to bed; take heed therefore that he roams not in thine also.

CHAP. VII.

Containing some Directions, tending to entrench and fortify the Christian against the Assaults and Wiles of the Devil, as a Troubler of the Soul's Peace.

Quest. HOW shall I stand in a defensive posture (may the Christian say) against these wiles of Satan as a troubler?

SECT. I.—*Answ.* First, If thou wouldst be guarded from him as a troubler, take heed of him as a seducer. The haft of satan's

hatchet (with which he lies chopping at the root of the Christian's comfort) is commonly made of the Christian's wood. First, he tempts to sin, and then for it. Satan is but a creature, and cannot work without tools; he can indeed make much of a little, but not any thing of nothing, as we see in his assaulting of Christ, where he troubled himself to little purpose, because *he came and found nothing of him*, John xiv. 30. Though the devil throws the stone, yet it is the mud in us that disturbs our comforts. 'Twas in vain for the Philistines to fall on Sampson till his lock was cut: Take heed therefore of yielding to his enticing motions; these are the stumbling blocks, at which he hopes thou wilt break thy shins, and bruise thy conscience, which once done, let him alone to spin out the cure. Indeed a saint's flesh heals not so easily as others: drink not of the devil's vessel, there is poison in the cup, his wine is a mocker, look not on it as it sparkles in the temptation; what thou drinkest down with sweetness, thou wilt be sure to bring up again as gall and wormwood. Above all sins, take heed of presumptuous ones; thou art not out of the danger of such. Psal. xix. 13. Sad stories we have of saints' falls, and what follows! Then, take him, jailor, (saith God) *deliver such a one unto satan;* and if a saint be the prisoner, and the devil the keeper, you may guess how he shall be used. O how he will tear and rend thy conscience! Though that dreadful ordinance is not used (as it should be) in the church, yet God's court sits, and if he excommunicates a soul from his presence, he falls presently into satan's hatches. Well, if through his subtilty thou hast been overtaken, take heed thou stayest not in the devil's quarters, shake the viper off thy hand, ply thee to thy chirurgeon: green wounds cure best; but if thou neglectest, and the wind get to it, thy conscience will soon fester. Ahab (we read 1 Kings xxii. 35.) was wounded in battle, and was loth to yield to it; it is said, *he was held up in his chariot*, but he died for it: When a soul hath received a wound, committed a sin, satan labours to bolster him up with flattering hopes, holds him up, as it were, in the chariot against God. What, yield for this! Afraid for a little scratch, and lose the spoil of thy future pleasures for this! O take heed of listening to such counsel; the sooner thou yieldest, the fairer quarter thou shalt have. Every step in this way sets thee further from thy peace. A rent garment is catched by every nail, and the rent made wider. Renew therefore thy repentance speedily, whereby this breach may be made up, and worse prevented, which else will befal thee.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Study that grand gospel-truth of a soul's justification before God; acquaint thyself with this in all its causes; the moving cause, the free mercy of God, being justified freely by his grace, Rom. iii. 24. the meritorious, which

is the blood of Christ; and the instrumental, faith, with all the sweet privileges that flow from it. An effectual door once opened to let the soul into this truth, would not only spoil the Pope's market (as Gardner said) but the devil's also; when satan comes to disquiet the Christian's peace (for want of a right understanding here) he is soon worsted by his enemy; as the silly hare, which might escape the dogs in some covert or burrough that is at hand, but (trusting to her heels) is by the print of her own feet and scent, which she leaves behind, followed, till at last (weary and spent) she falls into the mouth of them. In all that a Christian doth, there is a print of sinful infirmity, and a scent by which satan is enabled to trace and pursue him over hedge and ditch, this grace and that duty, till the soul, not able to stand before the accusation of satan, is ready to fall down in despair at his feet; whereas here is a hiding place, whither the enemy durst not come, the clefts of the rock, the hole of the stairs, which this truth leads unto. When satan chargeth thee for a sinner, perhaps thou interposest thy repentance and reformation, but soon art beaten out of those works, when thou art shewn the sinful mixtures that are in them; whereas this truth would choke all his bullets, that thou believest on him who had said, *Not unto him that worketh, but to him that believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is imputed for righteousness*, Rom. iv. 5. Get therefore into this tower of the gospel covenant, and roll this truth (as she that stone on the head of Abimelech) on the head of satan.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Be sure (Christian) thou keepest thy plains. Take heed that satan coop thee not in some straits, where thou canst neither well fight, nor fly. Such a trap the Egyptians hoped they had the Israelites in, when they cried, *They are entangled, they are entangled.* There are three kinds of straits wherein he labours to entrap the Christian; nice questions, obscure scriptures, and dark providences.

First, He labours to puzzle him with nice and scrupulous questions (on purpose to retard the work, and clog him in his motion,) that meeting with such intricacies in his Christian course, which he cannot easily resolve, thereby he may be made, either to give over, or go on heavily; therefore we have particular charge not to trouble the weak heads of young converts with *doubtful disputations*, Rom. xiv. 1. Sometimes satan will be asking the soul, how he knows its election; and where he finds one not so fully resolved, as to dare to own the same, he frames his argument against such a one's closing with Christ and the promise; as if it were presumption to assume that (which is only the portion of the elect) before we know ourselves of that number. Now, Christian, keep the plains, and thou art safe. 'Tis plain, we are not to make election a ground for our faith, but our faith and calling a *medium*

or argument to prove our election. Election indeed is first in order of divine acting. God chooseth before we believe; yet faith is first in our acting. We must believe before we can know we be elected; yea, by believing we know it. The husbandman knows it is spring by the sprouting of the grass, though he hath no astrology to know the position of the heavens; thou mayest know thou art elect as surely, by a work of grace in thee, as if thou hadst stood by God's elbow when he writ thy name in the book of life. It had been presumption for David to have thought he should have been King, till Samuel anointed him; but then none at all; when thou believest first, and closest with Christ, then is the spirit of God sent to anoint thee to the kingdom of heaven; this is that holy oil which is poured upon none but heirs of glory; and 'tis no presumption to read what God's gracious purpose was towards thee of old, when he prints those his thoughts, and makes them legible in thy effectual calling; here thou dost not go up to heaven, and pry into God's secrets, but heaven comes down to thee, and reveals them. Again, he will ask the Christian what was the time of his conversion; art thou a Christian (will he say), and dost thou not know when thou commencedst? Now keep the plains, and content thyself with this, that thou seest the streams of grace, though the time of thy conversion be, like the head of Nilus, not to be found. God oft comes betimes, before gross sins have deflowered the soul, and steals into the creature's bosom without much noise. In such a case satan doth but abuse thee, when he sends thee on this errand; you may know the sun is up, though you did not observe when it rose. Again, what will become of thee (saith satan) if God should bring thee into such an affliction or trial, when thou must burn or turn, or when all thy outward estate shall be rent from thee, no meal in the barrel, or money in the purse; darest thou have so good an opinion of thyself, as to think that thy faith will hold out in such an hour of temptation? If thou hast but half an eye, Christian, thou mayest see what satan drives at; this is an ensnaring question; by the fear of future troubles he labours to bring thee into a neglect of thy present duty, and indispose thee also for such a state whenever it falls. If a man hath much business to do on the morrow, 'tis his wisdom to discharge his mind thereof (when composing to sleep), lest the thoughts thereof break his rest, and make him more unfit in the morning. The less rest the soul hath in God and his promise concerning future events, the less strength it will find to bear them when the pinch comes. When therefore thou art molested with such fears, pacify thy heart with these three plain conclusions.

First, Every event is the product of God's providence; not a sparrow, much less a saint, falls to the ground by poverty, sickness, persecution, &c. but the hand of God is in it.

Secondly, God hath put in a caution, *he will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. He that enables thee in one condition, will in another. God learns his servants their whole trade. Grace is an universal principle. At the first moment of thy spiritual life, suffering grace was infused as well as praying grace.

Thirdly, God is wise to conceal the succours he intends in the several changes of thy life, that so he may draw thy heart into an entire dependence on his faithful promise. Thus to try the metal of Abraham's faith, he let him go on, till his hand was stretched forth, and then he comes to his rescue. Christ sends his disciples to sea, but stays behind himself, on a design to try their faith, and shew his love. Comfort thyself therefore with this, though thou seest not thy God in the way, yet thou shalt find him in the end.

Secondly, Satan perplexes the tender consciences of doubting Christians with obscure scriptures, whose sense lies too deep for their weak and distempered judgments readily to find out, and with these he hampers poor souls exceedingly; indeed as melancholy men delight in melancholy walks, so doubting souls most frequent such places of scripture in their musing thoughts, as increase their doubts; how many have I known that have looked so long on those difficult places, Heb. vi. 7. Heb. x. 26. (which pass the understanding as a swift stream the eye, so that the sense is not perceived without great observation) till their heads have turned round, and they at last (not able to untie the difficulties) have fallen down into despairing thoughts and words of their own condition, crying out, O they have sinned against knowledge of the truth, and therefore no mercy remains for them; who if they would have refreshed their understandings by looking off these places (whose engraving is too curious to be long pored on by a weak eye), they might have found that in other scriptures plainly expressed, which would have enabled them, as through a glass, more safely to have viewed these; therefore, Christian, keep the plains; thou mayest be sure 'tis thine enemy that gives thee such stones to break thy teeth, when thy condition calls rather for bread than wine, such scriptures, I mean, as are most apt to nourish thy faith, and cheer thy drooping spirit. When thou meetest such plain scriptures which speak to thy case, go over where it is fordable, and do not venture beyond thy depth. Art thou afraid, because thou hast sinned since the knowledge of the truth, that therefore no sacrifice remains for thee? See David and Peter's case, how it patterns thine, and left upon record that their recovery may be a key in thine hand to open such places as these; mayest thou not safely conclude from these, This is not their meaning, that none can be saved that sin after knowledge? Indeed in both these places, it is neither meant of the falls of such as

ever

ever had true grace, nor of a falling away in some particular acts of sin, but of a total universal falling away from the faith (the doctrine of it as well as seeming practice of it.) Now if the root of the matter were ever in thee, other scriptures will first comfort thee against those particular apostasies into which thou hast relapsed, by sweet promises inviting such to return, and precedents of saints, who have had peace spoken to them after such folly, and also they will satisfy thee against the other, by giving full security to thy faith, that thy little grace shall not die, being immortal, though not in its proper essence, because a creature, yet by covenant, as it is a child of promise.

Thirdly, Dark providences. From these satan disputes against God's love and grace in the soul. First, he got a commission to plunder Job of his temporal estate, and bereave him of his children, and then labours to make him question his spiritual estate and sonship: his wife would have him entertain hard thoughts of God, saying, *Curse God and die;* and his friends as hard thoughts of himself (as if he were an hypocrite); and both upon the same mistake, as if such an afflicted condition, and a gracious state, were inconsistent. Now, Christian, keep the plains, and neither from this charge God foolishly for thine enemy, nor thyself as his; read the saddest providence with the comment of the word, and thou canst not make such a harsh interpretation. As God can make a straight line with a crooked stick, be righteous when he useth wicked instruments; so also gracious when he dispenseth harsh providences. Joseph kept his love, when he spake roughly to his brethren. I do not wonder that the wicked think they have God's blessings, because they are in the warm sun: Alas, they are strangers to God's counsels, void of his spirit, and sensual, judging of God and his providence by the report present feeling makes of them; like little children, who think every one loves them that gives them plumbs. But 'tis strange, that a saint should be at a loss for his afflicted state, when he hath a key to decipher God's character: Christian, hath not God secretly instructed thee by his spirit from the word, how to read the short hand of his providence? Dost not thou know that the saints afflictions stand for blessings? *Every son whom he loves he corrects;* and prosperity in a wicked state, must it not be read a curse? Doth not God damn such to be rich, honourable, victorious in this world, as well as to be tormented in another world? God gives them more of these than they seem to desire sometimes, and all to bind them faster up in a deep sleep of security, as Jael served Sisera, Judg. v. 25. He shall have milk, though he asked but water, that she might nail him the surer to the ground. Milk having a property, as some write, to incline to sleep.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, Be careful to keep thy old receipts which

which thou hast from God for the pardon of thy sins. There are some gaudy days and jubilee-like festivals, when God comes forth clothed with the robes of his mercy, and holds forth the sceptre of his grace more familiarly to his children than ordinary, bearing witness to their faith, sincerity, &c. and then the firmament is clear, not a cloud to be seen to darken the Christian's comfort. Love and joy are the soul's repast and pastime, while this feast lasts. Now when God withdraws, and this cheer is taken off, satan's work is how he may deface and wear off the remembrance of this testimony, which the soul triumphs in for its spiritual standing, that he may not have it as an evidence when he shall bring about the suit again, and put the soul to produce his writings for his spiritual state, or renounce his claim. It behoves thee therefore to lay them up safely: Such a testimony may serve to nonsuit thy accuser many years hence; one affirmative from God's mouth for thy pardoned state, carries more weight, though of old date, than a thousand negatives from satan's. *David's songs of old* spring in with a light to his soul in his midnight sorrows.

Quest. But what counsel would you give me, saith the distressed soul, who cannot fasten on my former comforts, nor dare to avouch those evidences, which once I thought true? I find indeed there have been some treaties of old between God and my soul; some hopes I have had, but these are now so defaced and interlined with backslidings, repentances, and falls again, that now I question all my evidences, whether true or counterfeit: What shall one in this case do?

Answ. First, Renew thy repentance, as if thou hadst never repented. Put forth fresh acts of faith, as if thou hadst never believed. This seriously done, will stop satan's mouth with an unexpected answer. Let him object against thy former actings as hypocritical, what can he say against thy present repenting and believing, which, if true, sets thee beyond his shot. It will be harder for satan to disprove the present workings of God's gracious spirit, whilst the impressions thereof are fresh, than to pick an hole in thy old deeds and evidences. Acts are transient; and as wicked men look at sins committed many years since as little or none, by reason of that breadth of time that interposeth, so the Christian upon the same account stands at great disadvantage, to take the true aspect of those acts of grace, which so long ago passed between God and him, though sometimes even those are of great use. As God can make a sinner possess the sins of his youth, as if they were newly acted, to his terror in his old age, so God can present the comforts and evidences which of old the saint received, with those very thoughts he had then of them, as if they were fresh and new.

And therefore, Secondly, If he haunts thee with fears of thy spiritual

spiritual estate, ply thee to the throne of grace, and beg a new copy of thy old evidence, which thou hast lost. The original is in the pardon-office in heaven, whereof Christ is master; if thou art a saint, thy name is upon record in that court: make thy moan to God, hear what news from heaven, rather than listen to the tales which are brought by thine enemy from hell. Did such reason less with satan, and pray over their fears more to God, they might sooner be resolved. Can you expect truth from a liar, and comfort from an enemy? Did he ever prophecy well of believers? Was not Job the devil's hypocrite, whom God vouched for a non-such in holiness, and proved him so at last? If he knew that thou wert a saint, would he tell thee so? If an hypocrite, he would be as loth thou shouldst know it; turn thy back therefore on him, and go to thy God: fear not, but sooner or later he will give his hand again to thy certificate. But look thou dost not pass rashly a censure on thyself, because a satisfactory answer is not presently sent at thy desire; the messenger may stay long, and bring good news at last.

Thirdly, Shun battle with thine enemy until thou art in a fitter posture; and that thou mayest draw into thy trenches, and make an honourable retreat into those fastnesses and strengths, which Christ hath provided for his sick and wounded soldiers. Now there are two places of advantage into which deserted souls may retire; the name of God, and the absolute promises of the gospel; these I may call the fair havens, which are then chiefly of use, when the storm is so great that the ship cannot live at sea. O, saith satan, dost thou hope to see God? None but the pure in heart shall be blest with that vision. Thinkest thou to have comfort? That is the portion of the mourners in spirit. Now, soul, though thou canst not say, in the hurry of temptation, thou art the pure and the mourner in spirit, yet then say thou believest God is able to work these in thee, yea, hath promised such a mercy to poor sinners; 'tis his covenant (he will give a new heart, a clean heart, a soft heart); and there I wait, knowing, as there was nothing in the creature to move the great God to make such promises, so there can be nothing in the creature to hinder the Almighty his performance of them, where and when he pleaseth. This act of faith, accompanied with a longing desire after that grace thou canst not yet find, and an attendance on the means, though it will not fully satisfy all thy doubts, may be, yet will keep thy head above water, that thou despairest not; and such a prop thou needest in this case, or the house falls.

Fourthly, If yet satan dogs thee, call in help, and keep not the devil's counsel. The very strength of some temptations lies in the concealing of them, and the very revealing of them to some faithful friend (like the opening and pricking of an impostume)

gives

gives the soul present ease: Satan knows this too well; and therefore, as some thieves, when they come to rob an house, either gag them in it, or hold a pistol to their breast, frightening them with death, if they cry or speak, thus satan, that he may the more freely rifle the soul of its peace and comfort, overawes it so, that it dares not disclose his temptation. O, saith satan, if thy brethren or friends know such a thing by thee, they will cast thee off, others will hoot at thee. Thus many a poor soul hath been kept long in its pangs by biting them in; thou losest (Christian) a double help by keeping the devil's secret, the counsel and prayers of thy fellow-brethren; and what an invaluable loss is this!

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Saints Victory over their subtle Enemy, and whence it is that Creatures so overmatched, should be able to stand against Satan's Wiles.

THE second branch of the Apostle's argument follows, to excite them the more vigorously to their arms, and it is from the possibility, yea, certainty of standing against this subtle enemy, if thus armed, *That they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* So that this gives the Apostle's argument its due temperament; for he meant not to scare them into a cowardly flight, or sullen despair of victory, when he tells them their enemy is so subtle and politick; but to excite them to a vigorous resistance, from the assured hope of strength to stand in battle, and victoriously after it; which two I conceive are comprehended in that phrase, *standing against the wiles of satan.* Sometimes *to stand* implies a fighting posture; so ver. 14. Sometimes a conquering posture, Job xix. 25. *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.* That earth which was the field where all the bloody battles were fought between him and satan, on it shall he stand, when not an enemy shall dare to shew his head. So that, taking both these in, the observation is,

Doct. Satan, with all his wits and wiles, shall never vanquish a soul armed with true grace; nay, he that hath this armour of God on shall vanquish him. Look into the word, you shall not find a saint but hath been in the list with him, sifted and winnowed more or less by this enemy, yet at last we find them all coming off with an honourable victory; as in David, Job, Peter, Paul, who were the hardest put to it of any upon record; and lest some should attribute their victory to the strength of their inherent grace,

grace, above others of their weaker brethren, you have the glory of victories appropriated to God, in whom the weak are as strong as the strongest, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Jam. v. 21. We shall give a double reason of this truth, why the Christian, who seems to be so overmatched, is yet so unconquerable.

Reas. First, The curse that lies upon satan and his cause. God's curse blasts wherever it comes. The Canaanites with their neighbour-nations were *bread for Israel*, though people famous for war; and why? They were cursed nations. The Egyptians a politic people; *Let us deal wisely* (say they); yet being cursed of God, this lay like a thorn at their heart, and was at last their ruin; yea, let the Israelites themselves (who carry the badge of God's covenant on their flesh) by their sins once become the people of God's curse, and they are trampled like dirt under the Assyrian's foot. This made Balak beg so hard for a curse upon Israel. Now there is an irrecoverable curse cleaves to satan, from Isa. x. 5. Gen. iii. 14, 15. *And the Lord said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed, &c.* which place, though partly meant of the literal serpent, yet chiefly of the devil and the wicked (his spiritual serpentine brood), as appears by the enmity pronounced against the serpent's seed and the woman's, which clearly holds forth the feud between Christ with his seed, against the devil and his. Now there are two things in that curse which may comfort the saints. First, the curse prostrates satan under their feet, *Upon thy belly shalt thou go*, which is no more than is elsewhere promised, that God *will subdue satan under our feet.* Now this prostrate condition of satan assures believers, that the devil shall never lift his head (that is, his wily policy) higher than the saint's heel. He may make thee limp, but not bereave thee of thy life; and this bruise which he gives thee shall be rewarded with the *breaking* of his *own head*, that is, the utter ruin of him and his cause. Secondly, his food is here limited and appointed. Satan shall not devour whom he will. The *dust* is his food, which seems to restrain his power to the wicked, who are of the earth, earthy, mere dust; but for those who are of a heavenly extraction, their graces are reserved for Christ's food, Cant. vii. 13. and their souls surely are not a morsel for the devil's tooth.

The second reason is taken from the wisdom of God, who as he undertakes the ordering of the Christian's way to heaven, Psal. xxxvii. 24. so especially this business of satan's temptations. We find Christ was not led of the evil spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, but of the Holy Spirit, Matt. iv. 1. Satan tempts not when he will, but when God pleaseth; and the same Holy Spirit which led Christ into the field, brought him off with victory. And therefore we find him marching in *the power of the Spirit* (after he

he had repulsed satan) into Galilee, Luke iv. 14. When satan tempts a saint, he is but God's messenger, 2 Cor. xii. 7. *There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of satan to buffet me*, so our translation. But rather as Beza, who will have it *in casu recto*, the messenger satan, implying that he was sent of God to Paul, and indeed the errand he came about was too good and gracious to be his own, *Lest I should be exalted above measure;* the devil never meant to do Paul such a good office; but God sends him to Paul, as David sent Uriah with letters to Joab; neither knew the contents of their message. The devil and his instruments, both are God's instruments, therefore the wicked are called his sword, his ax, Psal. xvii. 13. Isa. x. 15. Now let God alone to wield the one, and handle the other. He is but a bungler that hurts and hackles his own legs with his own ax; which God should do, if his children should be the worse of satan's temptations. Let the devil choose his way, God is for him at every weapon. If he'll try it by force of arms, and assault the saints by persecution, as *the Lord of Hosts*, he will oppose him. If by policy and subtilty, he is ready there also. The devil and his whole council are but fools to God. Nay, their wisdom is foolishness. Cunning and art commend every thing but sin. The more artificial the watch, the picture, &c. the better; but the more wit and art in sin, the worse, because it is employed against an all-wise God, that cannot be outwitted, and therefore will in the end but pay the workman in greater damnation. *The foolishness of God is wiser than man*, yea, than the wisdom of men and devils, that is, the means and instruments which God opposeth satan withal. What weaker than a sermon? Who sillier than the saints in the account of the wise world? Yet God is wiser in a weak sermon, than satan in his deep plots (wherein the state-heads of a whole conclave of profound cardinals are knocked together); wiser in his simple ones, than satan in his Achitophels and Sanballats; and truly God chooseth on purpose to defeat the policies of hell and earth by these, that he may put such to greater shame, 1 Cor. i. 21. How is the great scholar ashamed to be baffled by a plain countryman's argument? Thus God calls forth Job to wrestle with satan and his seconds (for such his three friends shewed themselves in taking the devil's part), and sure he is not able to hold up his cudgels against the fencing-master, who is beaten by one of his scholars. God sits laughing, while hell and earth sit plotting, Psal. ii. 5. *He disappointeth the devices of the crafty*, he breaketh their studied thoughts and plots, as the words import, Job v. 12. in one moment pulling down the labours of many years' policy. Indeed, as great men keep wild beasts for game and sport (as the fox, the boar, &c.), so doth God satan and his instruments, to manifest

his

his wisdom in the taking of them. It is observed, that the very hunting of some beasts affords not only pleasure to the hunter, but also more sweetness to the eater. Indeed God, by displaying of his wisdom in the pursuit of his saints enemies, doth superadd a sweet relish to their deliverances at last. *He brake the heads of the Leviathan in pieces, and gave him to be meat to his people.* After he had hunted Pharoah out of all his forms and burroughs, now he breaks the very brains of all his plots, and serves them up to his people with the garnishment of his wisdom and power.

CHAP. IX.

An Account is given, how the All-wise God doth outwit the Devil in his tempting of Saints to Sin; wherein are laid down the Ends Satan propounds, and how he is prevented in all, with the gracious Issue that God puts to these his Temptations.

Quest. BUT *how doth God defeat Satan, and outwit his wiles in tempting his Saints?*

Answ. This God doth, by accomplishing his own gracious ends for the good and comfort of his people, out of those temptations from which satan designs their ruin; this is the noblest kind of conquest, to beat back the devil's weapon to the wounding of his own head, yea, to cut it off with the devil's own sword; thus God sets the devil to catch the devil, and lays, as it were, his own counsels under satan's wings, and makes him hatch them. Thus the patriarchs helped to fulfil Joseph's dream, while they are thinking to rid their hands of him. To instance in a few particulars.

SECT. I.—First, Satan by his temptations aims at the defiling of the Christian's conscience, and disfiguring that beautiful face of God's image, which is engraven with holiness in the Christian's bosom; he is an unclean spirit himself, and would have them such, that he might glory in their shame; but God outwits him, for he turneth the temptations of satan to sin, to the purging them from sin; they are the *black soap* with which God washeth his saints *white*.

First, God useth the temptations of satan to one sin, as a preventative against another; so Paul's *thorn in the flesh* to prevent his pride. God sends satan to assault Paul on that side where he is strong, that in the mean time he may fortify him where he is weak. Thus satan is befooled; as sometimes we see an army sitting down before a town, where it wastes its strength to no purpose, and in the mean time gives the enemy an advantage to recruit, and all this by the counsel of some Hushai, that is, a

secret

secret friend to the contrary side. God, who is the saint's true friend, sits in the devil's counsel, and overrules proceedings there to the saint's advantage; he suffers the devil to annoy the Christian with temptations to blasphemy, atheism; and by these, together with the troubles of spirit they produce, the soul is driven to duty, is humbled in the sense of these horrid apparitions in its imagination, and secured from abundance of formality and pride, which otherwise God saw invading him. As in a family, some business falls out, which keeps the master up later than ordinary, and by this the thief, who that night intended to rob him, is disappointed; had not such a soul had his spirit of prayer and diligence kept awake by those afflicting temptations, 'tis likely satan might have come as a seducer, and taken him napping in security.

Secondly, God purgeth out the very sin satan tempts to, even by his tempting. Peter never had such a conquest over his self-confidence, never such an establishment of his faith, as after his foul fall in the High-Priest's hall. He that was so well persuaded of himself before, as to say, though all were offended with Christ, yet would not he; how modest and humble was he in a few days become, when he durst not say he loved Christ more than his fellow-brethren, to whom before he had preferred himself! What an undaunted confessor of Christ and his gospel doth he prove before councils and rulers, who even now was dashed out of countenance by a silly maid! and all this the product of satan's temptation sanctified unto him. Indeed a saint hath a discovery, by his fall, what is the prevailing corruption in him; so that the temptation doth but stir the humour, which the soul having found out, hath the greater advantage to evacuate, by applying those means, and using those ingredients which do purge that malady, *cum delectu*. Now the soul will call all out against this destroyer; Paul had not taken such pains to *buffet his body*, had he not found satan knocking at that door.

Thirdly, God useth these temptations for the advancing of the whole work of grace in the heart. One spot occasions the whole garment to be washed. David overcome with one sin, renews his repentance for all, Psal. li. A good husband, when he seeth it rain in at one place, sends for the workman to look over all the house. This indeed differenceth a sincere heart from a hypocrite, whose repentance is partial, soft in one plot, and hard in another. Judas cries out of his treason, but not a word of his thievery and hypocrisy. The hole was no wider in his conscience than where the bullet went in; whereas true sorrow for one sin breaks the heart into shivers for others also.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Satan, by tempting one saint, hath a mischievous design against others, either by encouraging them to

sin by the example of such a one, or discouraging them in their holy course by the scandal he hath given; but God here befools him.

First, Making the miscarriages of such, a seasonable caveat to others to look to their standing. Dost thou see a meek Moses provoked to anger! What watch and ward hast thou need keep over thy unruly heart? Though loud winds do some hurt, by blowing down here a loose tile, and there a turret (which was falling before), yet the common good surmounts the private damage of some few; these being as a broom in God's hand to sweep and cleanse the air; so, though some (that are wicked) are by God's righteous judgment for the same hardened into future abominations by the saints falls, yet the good which sincere souls receive by having their formality and security in a further degree purged, doth abundantly countervail the other, who are but sent a little faster whither they were going before.

Secondly, God makes his saints falls an argument for comfort to distressed consciences. This hath been, and is as a feather (when the passage seems so stopt, that no comfort can be got down otherwise) to drop a little hope into the soul, to keep the creature alive from falling into utter despair. Some have been revived with this, when next door to hell in their own fears. David's sin was great, yet found mercy; Peter fell foully, yet is now in heaven. Why sittest thou here, O my soul, under the hatches of despair? Up, and call upon thy God for mercy, who hath pardoned the same to others.

Thirdly, God hath a design, in suffering satan to trounce some of his saints by temptation, to train them up in a fitness to succour their fellow-brethren in the like condition; he sends them hither to school (where they are under satan's ferula and lash), that his cruel hand over them may make them study the word and their own hearts, by which they get experience of satan's policies, till at last they commence masters in this art of comforting tempted souls. It is an art by itself, *to speak a word in season to the weary soul:* 'Tis not serving out an apprenticeship to human arts that will furnish a man for this; great doctors have proved great dunces here, knowing no more how to handle a wounded conscience, than a rustic the chirurgeon's instrument, in dissecting the body when an anatomy-lecture is to be read. 'Tis not the knowledge of the scripture (though a man were as well acquainted with it as an apothecary with his pots and glasses in his shop,) able to go directly to any promise on a sudden, will suffice. No, not grace itself, except exercised with these buffetings and soul-conflicts. Christ himself we find trained up in this school, Isa. l. 4. *He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned;* even as the tutor calls upon his pupil to read to him; and what is the lecture which

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is read to Christ, that he may have the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary soul? see ver. 5. *The Lord hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned I away my back, I gave my back to the smiters, &c.* His sufferings (which were all along mingled with temptations) were the lecture from which Christ came out so learned, to resolve and comfort distressed souls. So that the devil had better have let Christ alone, yea, and his saints also, who do him but the greater disservice in comforting others; none will handle poor souls so gently as those, who remember the smart of their own heart-sorrows; none so skilful in applying the comforts of the word to wounded consciences, as those who have lain bleeding themselves; such know the symptoms of soul-trouble, and feel other pains in their own bosoms, which some that know the scriptures (for lack of experience) do not, and therefore are like a novice physician, who perhaps can tell you every plant in the herbal, yet wanting the practical part, when a patient comes, knows not well how to make use of his skill. The saints' experiences help them to a sovereign treacle made of the scorpion's own flesh (which they through Christ have slain), and that hath a virtue above all other to expel the venom of satan's temptations from the heart.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Satan in tempting the saint to sin, labours to make a breach between God and the soul. He hates both, and therefore labours to divide these dear friends. If I can (thinks he) get such a one to sin, God will be angry, and when angry, he'll whip his child soundly, this will be some sport; and when God is correcting the saint, he'll be questioning the love of God to him, and cool in his love to God; so though I should not keep him from heaven at last, yet he shall have little joy thither in the way. In this case, God and the soul will be like a man and his wife fallen out, who neither of them look kindly one upon another. Now see how God befools satan in both these.

First, God useth his saints temptations as his method by which he advanceth the communications of his love unto them. The devil thought he had got the goal, when he got Adam to eat the forbidden fruit; he thought now he had man in the same predicament with himself, as unlikely ever to see the face of God as those apostate spirits: But alas! this was by God intended to usher in that great gospel-plan of saving man by Christ, who (as soon as this prologue of man's fall is done) is brought upon the stage in that grand promise of the gospel made to Adam, and at God's command undertakes the charge of recovering lost man out of satan's clutches, and reinstating him in his primitive glory, with an access of more than ever man had at first, so that the meanest lily in Christ's field exceeds Adam in all his native royalty. And as satan sped in his first temptation, so he is still on the losing

hand: What got he by all his pains upon Job, but to let that holy man know at last how dearly God loved him? When he foiled Peter so shamefully, do we not find Christ owning Peter with as much love as ever? Peter must be the only disciple, to whom by name the joyful news of the resurrection is sent, *Go tell thy disciples and Peter;* as if Christ had said, be sure let his sad heart be comforted with this news, that he may know I am friends with him for all his late cowardice.

Quest. But doth not this seem to countenance sin, and make Christians heedless, whether they fall into temptations or no? If God does thus shew his love to his saints after their falls and foils, why should we be so shy of sin, which ends so well at last?

Ans. Two things will prevent the danger of such an inference.

First, We must distinguish between a soul's being foiled through his own infirmity, and his enemies subtilty and power overmatching him, and another, who through a false heart doth voluntarily prostrate himself to the lust of satan; though a general will show little pity to a soldier that should traitorously throw down his arms and run to the enemy, yet if another in fighting receives a wound and be worsted, it will be no dishonour for him to express his pity and love; no, though he should send him out of the field in his own coach, lay him in his own bed, and appoint him his own chirurgeon. God doth not encourage wickedness in a saint, but pities weakness. Even when the saints fall into a sin in its nature presumptuous, they do not commit it so presumptuously as others: there is a part true to God in their bosoms, though overvoted. Moses spake unadvisedly, but the devil had his instruments to provoke him, quite against the good man's temper. David numbers the people, but see how the devil dogged and haunted him, till at last he got the better, 1 Chron. xxi. 1. *Satan stood up and provoked David to number Israel.* How bravely did Job repel satan's darts? No wonder if in such a shower some one should get between the joints of his armour. And for Peter, we know, good man, with what a loyal heart, yea, zealous, he went into the field, though when the enemy appeared, his heart failed him.

Secondly, Consider but the way how God communicates his love after the saints falls, not in sinning, or for sinning, but in mourning and humbling their souls for their sins. Indeed, did God smile on them while acting sinfully, this might strengthen their sin, as wine in a fever would the disease; but when the fit is off, the venom of the disease spent, and breathed out in a kindly humiliation, now the creature lies low. God's wine and comfort is a cordial to the drooping spirit, not fuel for sin. When David was led into the temptation first, he must be clad in sack-cloth and mourning, and then God takes it off, and puts on a garment

of

of joy and praise, 1 Chron. xxi. 10, 15. Job, though he exprest so much courage and patience, yet (bewraying some infirmities after he was baited long by so many fresh dogs, men and devils) he must cry *peccavi*, and abhor himself in dust and ashes, before God will take him into his arms, Job xlii. 6. And the same way God takes with his children. Now, to his saints in such a posture, God may with safety, to his honour and their good, give a larger draught of his love than ordinary; their fears and sorrow which their sin hath cost them, will serve instead of water to dash this strong wine of joy, and take away its headiness, that it neither fume up into pride, or occasion them to reel backward into apostacy.

Quest. But why doth God now communicate his love?

Ans. 1. First, from his pitiful nature; *You have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy.* God loves not to rake in bleeding wounds; he knows a mourning soul is subject to be discouraged. A frown or angry look from God, whom the saint so dearly loves, must needs go nearer the heart, therefore God declares himself at hand to revive such, Isa. lvii. 15. And he gives the reason, v. 16. *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before me.* Whose spirit is there meant? Not of the presumptuous sinner: he goes on and never blunks, but of the contrite and humble ones. As the father observes the disposition of his children, one commits a fault and goes on rebelliously, despising his father's anger; another (when offending) lays it to heart, refuseth to eat, gets into some corner to lament the displeasure of his father; the father sees it, and his bowels yearn towards him. Indeed, should he not put his child out of fear by discovering his love, the spirit of such a one would fail; 'tis not possible there should be a long breach between such a father and such a son, the one relenting over his sin, the other over his mourning son.

Secondly, God doth thus, to pour the greater shame upon satan, who is the great make-bate between God and the soul. How is the man ashamed that hath stirred up variance between husband and wife, father and son, to see the breach made up, and all set themselves against him? It went ill on Christ's side, when Herod and Pilate were made friends, and can it go well with satan to see all well between God and his children? If Esther be in favour, Haman her enemy shall have his face covered. Indeed, this covers satan's face with shame, to see a poor saint even now his prisoner, whom he had leave to rob and plunder, tempt and disquiet, now sitting in the sunshine of God's love, while he like a raving lion takes on for the loss of his prey.

Secondly, Satan's aim is, to weaken the saint's faith on God,

and cool his love to God, but he is befooled in both: for, first, God turns their temptations, yea, their falls, to the further establishment of their faith, which (like the tree) stands stronger for its shaking, or like the giant Anteus, who in his wrestling with Hercules is feigned to get strength by every fall to the ground. False faith, indeed, once foiled, seldom comes on again; but true faith rises and fights more valiantly, as we see in Peter and other scripture-examples. Temptation to faith is as fire to gold, 1 Pet. i. 7. The fire doth not only discover which is true gold, but makes the true gold more pure; it comes out perhaps less in bulk and weight, because severed from that soil and dross which embossed it, but more in value and worth. When satan is bound up, and the Christian walks under the shines of divine favour, and encouragement of divine assistance; his faith may appear great, if compared with another under the withdrawings of God, and buffetings of satan; but this is not equal judgment; as if to try who is the biggest of two men, we should measure one naked, and the other over his clothes; or in comparing two pieces of gold, weigh one with the dross and dirt it contracts in the purse, with the other purged from these in the fire: faith before temptation hath such heterogeneal stuff in it, that cleaves to it, and goes for faith; but when temptation comes, these are discovered. Now the Christian feels corruption stir, which lay as dead before; now a cloud comes between the soul and the sweet face of God (the sense of which latter, and the little sense of the other bore up his faith before); but these bladders pricked, he comes now to learn the true stroke of this heavenly art of swimming on the promise, having nothing else to bear him up but that; and a little of this carries more of the precious nature of faith in it than all the other; yea, is (like Gideon's handful of men) stronger, when all these accessaries to faith are sent away, than when they were present; and here is all the devil gets: instead of destroying his faith which he aims at, he is the occasion of refining of it, and thereby adding to its strength.

Secondly, The love of tempted saints is enkindled to Christ by their temptations, and foils in their temptations. Possibly in the fit there may seem a damp upon their love, as when water is first sprinkled upon the fire; but when the conflict is a little over, and the Christian comes to himself, his love to Christ will break out like a vehement flame. First, the shame and sorrow which a gracious soul must needs feel in his bosom for his sinful miscarriage, while under the temptation, will provoke him to express his love to Christ above others; as is sweetly set forth in the spouse, who, when the cold fit of her distemper was off, and the temptation over, bestirs her to purpose, her lazy sickness was turned to love-sickness: she finds it as hard now to sit, as she did before

before to rise; she can rest in no place out of her beloved's sight, but runs and asks every one she meets for him. And whence come all this vehemency of her zeal? All occasioned by her undutiful carriage to her husband; she parted so unkindly with him, that (bethinking what she had done) away she goes to make her peace. If sins committed in unregeneracy have such a force upon a gracious soul, that the thought of them, though pardoned, will still break and melt the heart into sorrow (as we see in Magdalen), and prick on to shew zeal for God above others (as in Paul), how much more will the sins of a saint, who after sweet acquaintance with Jesus Christ, lifts up the heel against that bosom where he hath lain, affect, yea, dissolve, the heart, as into so many drops of water, and that sorrow provoke him to serve God at a higher rate than others! No child so dutiful in all the family, as he who is returned from his rebellion. Again, Secondly, As his own shame, so the experience which such a one hath of Christ's love above others, will increase his love. Christ's love is fuel to ours. *Ex eisdem nutrimur quibus constamus;* as it gives it being, so it affords growth: it is both mother and nurse to our love. The more Christ puts forth his love, the more heat our love gets, and next to Christ's dying love, none greater than his succouring love in temptation. The mother never hath such advantage, to shew her affection to her child, as when in distress, sick, poor, or imprisoned; so neither hath Christ to his children as when tempted, yea, worsted by temptation. When his children lie in satan's prison, bleeding under the wounds of their consciences, this is the season he takes to give an experiment of his tender heart in pitying, his faithfulness in praying for them, his mindfulness in sending succour to them, yea, his dear love in visiting them by his comforting spirit. Now when the soul hath got off some great temptation, and reads the whole history thereof together, (wherein he finds what his own weakness was to resist satan, nay, his unfaithfulness in complying with satan, which might have provoked Christ to leave him to the fury of satan); now to see both his folly pardoned, and ruin graciously prevented, and that by no other hand but by Christ's coming to his rescue (as Abishai to David, 2 Sam. xxi. when the giant thought to have slain him), this must needs exceedingly endear Christ to the soul. At the reading of such records, the Christian cannot but enquire, as Ahasuerus concerning Mordecai, who by discovering a treason had saved the King's life, what honour had been done to his sweet Saviour for all this. And thus Jesus Christ, whom satan thought to bring out of the soul's favour and liking, comes in the end to sit higher and surer in the saint's affection than ever.

CHAP. X.

A brief Application of the Point; in two Branches.

Use 1. THIS affords a reason why God suffers his dear children to fall into temptation, because he is able to outshoot satan in his own bow, and, in the thing wherein he thinks to outwit the Christian, to be above him. God will not only be admired by his saints in glory, for his love in their salvation, but for his wisdom in the way to it. The love of God in saving them will be the sweet draught at the marriage-feast, and the rare wisdom of God in effecting this, as the curious workmanship with which the cup shall be enamelled. Now wisdom appears most in untying of knots, and wading through difficulties. The more cross wards there are in a business, the more wisdom to fit a key to the lock, to make choice of such means as shall meet with the several turnings in the same. On purpose therefore doth God suffer such temptations to intervene, that his wisdom may be the more admired in opening all these, and leading his saints that way to glory, by which satan thought to have brought them to hell. The Israelites are bid *remember all the way that God led them in the wilderness for forty years*, Deut. viii. 2. The history of these wars, Christian, will be pleasant to read in heaven, though bloody to fight on earth. Moses and Elias talked with Christ on Tabor (an emblem of the sweet communion which shall pass between Christ and his saints in glory); and what was their talk, Luke ix. 30. but of his death and sufferings? It seems a discourse of our sufferings and temptations are not too low a subject for that blissful state. Indeed this left out, would make a blemish in the fair face of heaven's glory. Could the damned forget the way they went into hell, how oft the spirit of God was wooing, and how far they were overcome by the conviction of it; in a word, how many turns and returns there were in their journey forward and backward, what possibilities, yea probabilities, they had for heaven, when on earth; were but some hand so kind as to blot these tormenting passages out of their memories, it would ease them wonderfully. So, were it possible glorified saints could forget the way wherein they went to glory, and the several dangers that intervened from satan and their own backsliding hearts, they and their God too would be losers by it, I mean in regard of his manifestative glory. What is the glory wherein God appears at Zion's deliverance, those royal garments of salvation that make him admired of men and angels, but the celebration of all his attributes, according to what every one hath done towards their salvation? Now wisdom being that which the creature chiefly glories

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in, (and chosen by satan for his first bait, who made Eve believe she should be like God in knowledge and wisdom), therefore God, to give satan the more shameful fall, gives him leave to use his wits and wiles in tempting and troubling his children, in which lies his great advantage over the saints, that so the way to his own throne (where his wisdom shall, at last, as well as his mercy, sit in all its royalty) may be paved with the skulls, as I may so speak, of devils.

Secondly, This gives a strong cordial to our fainting faith, in the behalf of the church of Christ. If all the devil's wits and wiles will not serve him to overcome one single soldier in Christ's camp, much less shall he ever ruin the whole army. These are days of great confusion in the Christian world, and the chief fear of a gracious heart is for the ark, lest that should fall into the enemies hand, and when this palladium is taken, the city of God (his church) be trod under the feet of pride. I confess satan seems to get ground daily; he hath strangely wriggled into the bosoms and principles of many, who, by the fame of their profession and zeal, had obtained in the opinion of others to be reckoned among the chief of Christ's worthies in their generation. He hath sadly corrupted the truths of Christ, brought a disesteem on ordinances, (that by this, and as a judgment for this, the womb of the gospel is become in a great measure barren, and her children which hang about her breasts, thrive not in love and holiness as of old, when the milk was not so much nor that so spiritual): he hath had advantage by the divisions of the godly, to harden those that are wicked into a further disdain of religion, and by the bloody wars of late years, to boil up the wrath of the popish and prophane crew to a higher pitch of rage and fury against Christ's little remnant than ever; so that if ever God should suffer the sword to fall into their hand, they are disciplined and fitted to play the bloody butchers on Christ's sheep above their forefathers; neither are they so crest-fallen, but that they can hope for such a day, yea, take up some of those joys upon trust aforehand to solace themselves, while the rest follow. And now, Christian, perhaps their confidence, together with the distracted state of Christ's affairs in the world, may discompose thy spirit, concerning the issue of these providences that are rolling over our heads; but be still, poor heart, and know, that the contest is not between the church and satan, but between Christ and him; these are the two champions. Stand now, O ye army of saints, still by faith, to see the all-wise God wrestle with the subtle devil. If you live not to see the period of these great confusions, yet generations after you shall behold the Almighty smite off this Goliath's head with his own sword, and take this cunning hunter in the toil of his own policies; that faith which ascribes greatness and wis-

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dom to God, will shrink up satan's subtilty into a *nigrum nihil*, a thing of nothing. *Increduli timent diabolum, quasi leonem, qui fide fortes despiciunt quasi vermiculum*, Bern. Unbelief fears satan as a lion, faith treads on him as a worm. Behold therefore thy God at work, and promise thyself, that what he is about will be an excellent piece; none can drive him from his work. The pilot is beaten from the helm, and can do little in a storm but let the ship go adrift. The architect cannot work when night draws the curtain, yea, is driven off the scaffold with a storm of rain; such workmen are the wisest counsellors, and mightiest princes on earth. A pinch may come, when it is as vain to say, Help O king, as, Help O beggar; man's wisdom may be levelled with folly, but God is never interrupted. All the plots of hell and commotions on earth have not so much as shaken God's hand, to spoil one letter or line that he hath been drawing. The mysteriousness of his providence may hang a curtain before his work, that we cannot see what he is doing; but then *when darkness is about him, righteousness is the seat of his throne for ever*. O where is our faith (Sirs!) let God be wise, and all men and devils fools. What though thou seest a Babel more likely to go up, than a Babylon to be pulled down, yet believe God is making his secret approaches, and will clap his ladders on a sudden to the walls thereof: Suppose truth were prisoner with Joseph, and error the courtier, to have its head lift up by the favour of the times, yet doest not remember, that the way to truth's preferment lies through the prison; yea, what though the church were like Jonah in the whale's belly, swallowed up, to the eye of reason, by the fury of men; yet doest not remember the whale had not power to digest the prophet? O be not too quick to bury the church before she be dead. Stay while Christ tries his skill before you give it over; bring Christ by your prayers to its grave, to speak a resurrection word. Admirable hath the saints faith been in such straits; as Joseph's, who pawned his bones that God would visit his brethren, willing them to lay him where he believed they should be brought. Jeremiah purchased a field of his uncle, and pays down the money for it, and this when the Chaldean army quartered about Jerusalem, ready to take the city, and carry him with the rest into Babylon; and all this by God's appointment, Jer. xxii. 6, 7, 8. that he might shew the Jews by this, how undoubtedly he (in that sad juncture of time) did believe the performance of the promise for their return out of captivity. Indeed God counts himself exceedingly disparaged in the thoughts of his people (though at the lowest ebb of his church's affairs), if his naked word, and single bond of his promise, will not be taken as sufficient security to their faith for its deliverance.

VERSE

VERSE 12.

For we wrestle not against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities and Powers, against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, against spiritual Wickedness in high Places.

THE words are coupled to the precedent with that casual particle *For*, which either refers to the two foregoing verses, and then they are a further reason, pressing the necessity of Christian fortitude in the tenth verse, and furniture in the eleventh; or else to the last words of the eleventh verse, where the apostle having descried the saint's grand enemy to be satan, and described him in one of his attributes, his wily subtilty, he in this further displays him in his proper colours, not to weaken the saints hands, but waken their care, that seeing their enemy marching up in a full body, they might stand in better order to receive his charge. Where, by the way, we may observe the apostle's simplicity and plain dealing; he doth not undervalue the strength of the enemy, and represent him inconsiderable, as captains use to keep their soldiers together by slighting the power of their adversary; no, he tells them the worst at first. If satan had been to set out his own power, he could have challenged no more than is here granted him. See here the difference between Christ's dealing with his followers, and satan with his. Satan dares not let sinners know who that God is they fight against; this were enough to breed a mutiny in the devil's camp. Silly souls! they are drawn into the field by a false report of God and his ways, and are kept there together with lies and fair tales; but Christ is not afraid to shew his saints their enemy in all his power and principality, the weakness of God being stronger than the powers of hell.

CHAP. I.

Sheweth the Christian's Life here to be a continual Wrestling with Sin and Satan, and the Paucity of those who are true Wrestlers; as also how the true Wrestlers should manage their Combat.

THE words contain a lively description of a bloody and lasting war between the Christian and his implacable enemy; in which we may observe,

First, The Christian's state in this life, set out by this word *wrestling*.

Secondly,

Secondly, The assailants that appear in arms against the Christian, who are described; First, negatively, *Not flesh and blood:* Or rather comparatively, not chiefly flesh and blood. Secondly, positively, *but against principalities, powers, &c.*

SECT. I.—First, For the first, the wrestling or conflicting state of a Christian in this life is rendered observable here by a threefold circumstance.

First, The kind of combat which the Christian's state is here set out by, which though it be used sometimes for a wrestling of sport and recreation, yet here to set out the sharpness of the Christian's encounter; there are two things in wrestling that render it a sharper combat than others. First, Wrestling is not properly fighting against a multitude, but when one enemy singles out another, and enters the lists with him, each exerting their whole force and strength against one another, as David and Goliath, when the whole armies stood as it were in a ring to behold the bloody issue of that duel. Now this was more fierce than to fight in an army, where though the battle be sharp and long, the soldier is not always engaged, but falls off when he hath discharged, and takes breath awhile; yea, possibly may escape without hurt or stroke, because there the enemy's aim is not at this or that man, but at the whole heap: but in wrestling, one cannot escape so; he, being the particular object of the enemy's fury, must needs be shaken and tried to purpose. Indeed the word signifies such a strife, as makes the body shake again. Satan hath not only a general malice against the army of saints, but a spite against thee John, thee Joan: he'll single thee out for his enemy. We find Jacob when alone, a man wrestled with. As God delights to have private communication with his single saints, so the devil to try it hand to hand with the Christian, when he gets him alone. As we lose much comfort, when we do not apply the promise and providence of God to our particular persons and conditions; God loves me, pardons me, takes care of me; the water at the town-conduit doth me no good, if I want a pipe to empty it into my cistern; so it obstructs our care and watchfulness, when we conceive of satan's wrath and fury as bent in general against the saints, and not against me in particular. O how careful would a soul be in duty, if, as going to church or closet, he had such a serious meditation as this, Now satan is at my heels to hinder me in my work, if my God help me not!

Secondly, 'Tis a close combat. Armies fight at some distance, wrestlers grapple at hand. An arrow shot from afar may be seen and shunned; but when the enemy hath hold of one, there is no declining, but either he must resist manfully, or fall shamefully at his enemy's feet. Satan comes close up, and gets within the Christian, takes his hold of his very flesh and corrupt nature, and by this shakes him.

Secondly,

Secondly, The universality of the combat. *We* wrestle, which comprehends all; you may perceive the apostle on purpose changeth the pronoun *ye*, in the former verse, into *we* in this, that he may include himself as well as them; as if he had said, the quarrel is with every saint. Satan neither fears to assault the minister, nor despiseth to wrestle with the meanest saint in the congregation; great and small, minister and people, all must wrestle: Not one part of Christ's army in the field, and the other at ease in their quarters, where no enemy comes; here are enemies enough to engage all at once.

Thirdly, The permanency or duration of this combat, and that lies in the tense. Not, our wrestling *was* at first conversion, but now over, and we past the pikes; not, we *shall* wrestle when sickness comes, and death comes; but our wrestling *is*, the enemy is ever in sight of us, yea, in fight with us; there is an evil of every day's temptation, which (like Paul's bonds) abides us wherever we come. So that these particulars summed up, will amount to this point:

SECT. II.—*Doct.* The Christian's life is a continual wrestling. He is, as Jeremy said of himself, born *a man of strife*, or what the prophet to Asa, may be said to every Christian; *From hence thou shalt have wars*, from thy spiritual birth to thy natural death, from the hour when thou first didst set thy face to heaven, till thou shalt set thy foot in heaven. Israel's march out of Egypt was in gospel-sense, our taking the field against sin and satan; and when had they peace? Not till they lodged their colours in Canaan. *No condition* wherein the Christian here below is quiet. Is it prosperity or adversity? Here is work for both hands, to keep pride and security down in the one, faith and patience up in the other; no place, which the Christian can call privileged ground. Lot in Sodom wrestled with the wicked inhabitants thereof, his *righteous soul being vexed with their unclean conversation*. And how fares he at Zoar? Do not his own daughters bring a spark of Sodom's fire into his own bed, whereby he is enflamed with lust? Some have thought if they were in such a family, under such a ministry, out of such occasions, O then they never should be tempted as now they are: I confess change of air is a great help to weak nature, and these forenamed as vantage-ground against satan; but thinkest thou to fly from satan's presence thus? No, though thou shouldst take the wings of the morning, he would fly after thee; these may make him change his method of tempting, but not lay down his design; so long as his old friend is alive within, he will be knocking at the door without. *No duty* can be performed without wrestling: The Christian needs his sword as much as his trowel. He wrestles with a body of flesh; he cannot go his journey without it, and much ado to go with it. If the flesh be kept high and lusty, then

then 'tis wanton and will not obey; if low, then 'tis weak, and soon tires: Thus the Christian rides but little ground, because he must go his weak body's pace. He wrestles with a body of sin as well as flesh; this mutters and murmurs when the soul is taking up any duty. Sometimes it keeps the Christian from duty, so that he cannot do what he would; as Paul said, *I would have come once and again, but satan hindered me.* I would have prayed, may the Christian say, at such a time, and meditated on the word I heard, the mercies I received, at another, but this enemy hindered. 'Tis true indeed, grace sways the sceptre in such a soul; yet as school-boys, taking their time when their master is abroad, do shut him out, and for a while lord it in misrule, though they are whipt for it afterwards; thus the unregenerate part takes advantage when grace is not on its watch, to disturb its government, and shut it out from duty; though this last makes the soul more severe in mortifying, yet it costs some scuffle before it can recover its throne, and when it cannot shut from duty, yet then is the Christian wofully yoked with it in duty; it cannot do what it doth as it would: many a letter in its copy doth this enemy spoil, while he jogs him with impertinent thoughts; when the Christian is praying, then satan and the flesh are a-prating; he cries, and they louder, to put him out, or drown his cry. Thus we see the Christian is assailed on every side by his enemy; and how can it be other, when the seeds of war are laid deep in the natures of both, which can never be rooted up till the devil cease to be a devil, sin to be sin, and the saint to be a saint? Though wolves may snarl at one another, yet soon are quiet again, because the quarrel is not in their nature; but the wolf and the lamb can never be made friends. Sin will lust against grace, and grace draw upon sin whenever they meet.

SECT. III.—*Use* 1. First, This may reprove such as wrestle; but against whom? against God, not against sin and satan. These are bold men indeed, who dare try a fall with the Almighty; yet such there are, and a woe is pronounced against them, Isa. xlv. 9. *Wo unto him that striveth with his Maker.* 'Tis easy to tell which of these will be worsted. What can he do, but break his shins, that dasheth them against a rock? A goodly battle there is like to be, when thorns contest with fire, and stubble with flame. But where live those giants, that dare enter the lists with the great God? What are their names, that we may know them, and brand them for creatures, above all other, unworthy to live? Take heed, O thou who askest, that the wretched man whom thou seemest so to defy, be not found in thy own clothes itself. Judas was the traitor, though he would not answer unto his name, but put it off with a *Master, is it I?* and so mayest thou be the fighter against God. The heart is deceitful. Even holy David, for all his anger

ger was so hot against the rich man, that took away the poor man's ewe-lamb, that he bound it with an oath, the man should not live who had done it, yet proves at last to be himself the man, as the prophet told him, 2 Sam. xii.

Now there are two ways wherein men wrestle against God: First, When they wrestle against his spirit. Secondly, When they wrestle against his providence.

First, When they wrestle against his spirit. We read of the spirit's striving with the creature, Gen. vi. 3. *My spirit shall not always strive with man:* where the striving is not in anger and wrath to destroy them (that God could do without any stir or scuffle), but a loving strife and contest with man. The old world was running with such a career headlong unto their ruin, he sends his spirit to interpose, and by his counsels and reproofs, to offer, as it were, to stop and reclaim them; as if one seeing another ready to offer violence on himself, should strive to get the knife out of his hand, with which he would do the mischief: Or one that hath a purse of gold in his hand to give, should follow another by all manner of entreaties, striving with him to accept and take it. Such a kind of strife is this of the spirit's with men. They are the lusts of men (those bloody instruments of death, with which sinners are mischieving themselves) that the holy spirit strives by sweet counsels and entreaties to get out of our hands. They are Christ's, his grace and eternal life he strives to make us accept at the hands of God's mercy; and for repulsing the spirit thus striving with them, sinners are justly counted fighters against God: *Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost,* Acts vii. 51. Now there is a two-fold striving of the spirit, and so of our wrestling against it. First, The spirit strives in his messengers with sinners: They coming his errand, and not their own, he voucheth the faithful counsels, reproofs, and exhortations, which they gave, as his own act. Noah, that *preacher of righteousness*, what he said to the old world, is called *the preaching of the spirit,* 1 Pet. iii. 19. The pains that Moses, Aaron, and other servants of God, took in instructing Israel, is called the instruction of the spirit, Nehem. ix. 20. So that when the word which God's ministers bring in his name, is rejected, the faithful counsels they give are thrown at sinners heels, and made light of, then do they strive with the spirit, and wrestle against Christ as really, as if he visibly, in his own person, had been in the pulpit, and preached the sermon to them. When God comes to reckon with sinners, it will prove so; then God will rub up your memories, and mind you of his striving with you, and your unkind resisting him. *They, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, shall know they had a prophet among them,* Ezek. ii. 5. Now men soon forget whom and what they hear; ask

them

them what was prest upon their conscience in such a sermon, they have forgot; what were the precious truths laid out in another, and they are lost; and well were it for them, if their memories were no better in another world; it would ease their torments more than a little. But then they shall know they had a prophet among them, and what a price they had with him in their hands, tho' it was in fools keeping. They shall know what it was, and what he said, though a thousand years past, as fresh as if it were done but last night. The more zealous and compassionate, the more painful and powerful he was in his place, the greater shall their sin be found, to break from such holy violence offered to do them good. Surely God will have something for the sweat, yea, lives of his servants, which were worn out in striving with such rebellious ones. May be yet, sinners, your firmament is clear, no cloud to be seen that portends a storm; but know (as you use to say) winter does not rot in the clouds, you shall have it at last; every threatening which your faithful ministers have denounced against you out of the word, God is bound to make good. *He confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers,* Isa. xliv. 21. and that in judgment against sinners, confirming the threatenings, as well as in mercy performing the promises, which they declare as the portion of his children. But it will be time enough to ask such on sick-bed, or a dying hour, whether the words of the Lord delivered by their faithful preachers have not taken hold of them. Some have confessed with horror, they have, as the Jews, Zech. i. 6. *Like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, so hath he dealt with us.* Secondly, the spirit strives with men more immediately, when he takes his inward approaches to the consciences of men, debating in their own bosoms the case with them; one while he shews them their sins in their bloody colours, and whither they will surely bring them, if not looked to timely, which he doth so convincingly, that the creature smells sometimes the very fire and brimstone about him, and is at present in a temporal hell; another while he falls a parleying and treating with them, making gracious overtures to the sinner, if he will return at his reproof, presents the grace of the gospel, and opens a door of hope for his recovery, yea, falls a wooing and beseeching of him to throw down his rebellious arms, and come to Christ for life, whose heart is in a present disposition to receive and embrace the first motion the returning sinner makes for mercy. Now when the spirit of God follows the sinner from place to place, and time to time, suggesting such motions, and renewing his old suit, and the creature shall fling out of the spirit's hands thus striving with him, *re infecta*, as far from renouncing his lusts, or taking any liking to Christ as ever; this is to resist the spirit to his face, and it carries so much malignity in it, that

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(even where it hath not been final) poor humbled souls have been overset with the horror of it, that they could not for a long time be persuaded, but that it was the unpardonable sin. Take heed, therefore, sinners, how you use the spirit when he comes, knocking at the door of your hearts: Open at his knock, and he will be your guest, you shall have his sweet company; repulse him, and you have not a promise he will knock again. And if once he leave striving with thee, unhappy man, thou art lost for ever; thou liest like a ship cast up by the waves upon some high rock, where the tide never comes to fetch it off. Thou mayest come to the word, converse with other ordinances, but in vain. 'Tis the spirit of them which is both tide and wind, to set the soul afloat, and carry it on, or else it lies like a ship on dry ground, which stirs not.

Secondly, We wrestle against God when we wrestle with his providence, and that two ways; First, when we are discontented with his providential disposure of us. God's carving for us doth not please us so, but that we are objecting against his dealings towards us, at least muttering something with the fool in our hearts, which God hears as lightly as man our words. God counts then we begin to quarrel with him, when we do not acquiesce in, and say amen to his providence, wherever it is. He calls it *a contending with the Almighty*, Job xl. 1. yea, *a reproving of God.* And he is a bold man sure that dare find fault with God, and article against heaven. God challengeth him, whoever he is that doth this, to answer it at his peril. *He that reproveth God, let him answer it*, v. 2. of the chapter forementioned. It was high time for Job to have done, when he hears what a sense God puts upon those unwary words, which dropt from him in the anguish of his spirit and paroxysm of his sufferings; contend with the Almighty! Reprove God! Good man, how blank he is, and cries out, *I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.* Let God but pardon what is past, and he shall hear such language no more. O sirs, take heed of this wrestling above all other. Contention is uncomfortable, with whomsoever it is we fall out: neighbours or friends, wife or husband, children or servants; but worst of all with God. If God cannot please thee, but thy heart riseth against him, what hopes are there of thy pleasing him, who will take nothing kindly from that man who is angry with him? And how can love to God be preserved in a discontented heart that is always muttering against him? Love cannot think any evil of God, nor endure to hear any speak evil of him, but it must take God's part, as Jonathan David's, when Saul spake basely of him; and when it cannot be heard, will, like him, arise and be gone. When afflicted, love can allow thee to groan, but not to grumble. If thou wilt ease thy incumbered

spirit into God's bosom by prayer, and humbly wrestle with God on thy knees, love is for thee, and will help thee to the best arguments thou canst use to God: But if thou wilt vent thy distempered passions, and shew a mutinous spirit against God, this stabs it to the heart.

Secondly, We wrestle against providence, when incorrigible under the various dispensations of God towards us. Providence has a voice, if we had an ear; mercies should draw, afflictions drive; now when neither fair means nor foul do us good, but we are impenitent under both, this is to wrestle against God with both hands. Either of these have their peculiar aggravations. One is against love, and so disingenuous; the other is against the smart of his rod, and therein we slight his anger, and are cruel to ourselves in kicking against the pricks. Mercy should make us ashamed, wrath afraid to sin. He that is not ashamed has not the spirit of a man. He that is not afraid when smitten, is worse than a beast, who stands in awe of whip and spur. Sometimes mercy (especially these outward mercies, which have a pleasing relish to the carnal part in a Christian) hath proved a snare to the best of men: But then affliction useth to recover them; but when affliction makes men worse, and they harden themselves against God, to sin more and more while the rod is on them, what is like to reclaim them? Few are made better by prosperity, whom afflictions make worse. He that will sin, though he goes in pain, will much more if that once be gone. But take heed of thus contesting with God. There is nothing got by scuffling with God, but blows or worse. If he say he will afflict thee no more, 'tis even the worst he can say; 'tis as much as if he should say, he will be in thy debt till another world, and there pay thee altogether. But if he means thee mercy, thou shalt hear from him in some sharper affliction than ever. He hath wedges that can rive thee, wert thou a more knotty piece than thou art. *Are there yet the treasures of wickedness, and the scant measure that is abominable?* (saith God to Israel, Micah vi. 9.) What! incorrigible, though *the Lord's voice crieth unto the city*, bidding you *hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it?* See what course God resolves on, v. 13. *Therefore I will make thee sick in smiting of thee:* as if he had said, My other physic I see was too weak, it did not work to turn your stomach, but I will prepare a potion that shall make you sick at heart.

Secondly, It reproves those who seem to wrestle against sin, but not according to the word of command that Christ gives. There is a law in wrestling which must be observed, 2 Tim. ii. 5. *If a man also strive for masteries, yet he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully.* He alludes to the Roman games, to which there were judges appointed to see that no foul play were offered

contrary

contrary to the law for wrestling; the prize being denied to such, though they did foil their adversary, which the apostle improves to make the Christian careful in his war, as being under a stricter law and discipline, that requires not only valour to fight, but obedience to fight, by order, and according to the word of command: Now few do this that go for great wrestlers.

First, Some, while they wrestle against one sin, embrace another; and in this case, 'tis not the person wrestles against sin, but one sin wrestles with another, and 'tis no wonder to see thieves fall out when they come to divide the spoil; lusts are *divers*, Tit. iv. 3. and 'tis hard to please many masters, especially when their commands are so contrary; when pride bids lay on in bravery, lavish out in entertainment, covetousness bids lay up; when malice bids revenge, carnal policy saith, Conceal thy wrath, though not forgive. When lust sends to his whores, hypocrisy pulls him back for shame of the world. Now, is he God's champion that resists one sin at the command of another, it may be a worse?

Secondly, Some wrestle, but they are prest into the field, not volunteers, their slavish fear scares them at present from their lust; so that the combat is rather betwixt their conscience and will, than them and their lust: Give me such a sin, saith will; no, saith conscience, it will scald, and throws it away. A man may love the wine, though he is loth to have his lips burnt; *hypocrites themselves are afraid to burn.* In such combats the will at last prevails, either by bribing the understanding to present the lust it desires in a more pleasing dress (that conscience may not be scared with such hideous apparitions of wrath), or by pacifying conscience with some promise of repentance for the future, or by forbearing some sin for the present, which it can best spare; thereby to gain the reputation of something like reformation; or if all this will not do, then (prompted by the fury of its lust) the will proclaims open war against conscience, sinning in the face of it; like some wild horse (impatient of the spur which pricks him, and bridle that curbs him), gets the bit between his teeth, and runs with full speed, till at last he easeth himself of his rider; and then where he sees fattest pasture, no hedge or ditch can withhold him, till in the end you find him starving in some pond for his trespass: Thus many sin at such a rate, that conscience can no longer hold the reins, nor sit the saddle, but is thrown down and laid for dead; and then the wretches range where their lusts have the fullest meal, till at last they pay for their stolen pleasures most dearly, when conscience comes to itself, pursues them, and takes them more surely by the throat than ever, never to let them go till it brings them before God's tribunal.

Thirdly, Others wrestle with sin, but they do not hate it, and

therefore they are favourable to it, and seek not the life of sin as their deadly enemy; these wrestle in jest, and not in earnest; the wounds they give sin one day, are healed by the next. Let men resolve never so strongly against sin, yet it will creep again into their favour, till the love of sin be quenched in the heart; and this fire will never die of itself; the love of Christ must quench the love of sin, as Jerome excellently, *Unus amor extinguit alium.* This heavenly fire will indeed put out that flame of hell, which he illustrates by Ahashuerus's carriage to Vashti, his Queen, who in the first chapter makes a decree in all haste, that she comes no more before him; but when his passion is a little down, c. ii. v. 1. he begins to relent towards her, which his council perceiving, pretently seek out for a beautiful virgin, on whom the king might place his love, and take into his royal bed, which done, we hear no more of Vashti; then, and not till then, will the soul's decree stand against sin, when the soul hath taken Christ into his bosom.

SECT. IV.—Secondly, To the saints, seeing your life is a continual wrestling here on earth, 'tis your wisdom to study how you may best manage the combat with your worst enemy; which that you may do, take these few directions:

First, Look thou goest not into the field without thy second; my meaning is, engage God by prayer to stand at thy back; God is in a league offensive and defensive with thee, but he looks to be called. Did the Ephraimites take it ill, that Gideon called not them into the field, and may not God much more? As if thou meanest to steal a victory before he should know it. Thou hast more valour than Moses, who would not stir without God; no though he sent an angel for his lieutenant. Thou art wiser than Jacob, who to overcome Esau, now marching up, turns from him and falls upon God; he knew if he could wrestle with God, he might trust God to deal with his brother. Engage God, and the back-door is shut, no enemy can come behind thee; yea, thine enemy shall fall before thee. *God, turn the wisdom of Ahitophel into foolishness,* saith David; heaven saith amen to his prayer, and the wretch *hangs himself.*

Secondly, Be very careful of giving thine enemy hand-hold. Wrestlers strive to fasten upon some part or other, which gives them advantage more easily to throw their adversary; to prevent which, they used, First, to lay aside their garments. Secondly, to anoint their bodies. For the first, Christian, labour to put off the old man, which is most personal, that corruption which David calls his own iniquity, Psal. xviii. 23. This is the skirt which satan lays hold of; observe what it is, and mortify it daily, then satan will retreat with shame, when he sees the head of that enemy upon the wall, which should have betrayed thee into his hands.

Secondly, The Roman wrestlers used to anoint their bodies;

so do thou: Bathe thy soul with the frequent meditation of Christ's love. Satan will find little welcome where Christ's love dwells; love will kindle love, and that will be as a wall of fire to keep off satan; it will make thee disdain the offer of a sin, and, as oil, supple thy joints, and make agile to offend thy enemy. Think how Christ wrestled in thy quarrel: Sin, hell, and wrath, had all come full mouth upon thee, had not he coped with them in the way. And canst thou find in thy heart to requite his love, by betraying his glory into the hands of sin, by cowardice or treachery? Say not thou lovest him, so long as thou canst lay those sins in thy bosom, which plucked his heart out of his bosom. It were strange if a child should keep, and delight to use no other knife, but that wherewith his father was stabbed.

Thirdly, Improve the advantage thou gettest at any time wisely. Sometimes the Christian hath his enemy on the hip, yea, on the ground, can set his foot on the very neck of his pride, and throw away his unbelief, as a thing absurd and unreasonable; now (as a wise wrestler) fall with all thy weight upon thine enemy; though a man think it foul play to strike when his adversary is down, yet do not thou so compliment with sin, as to let it breathe or rise. Take heed thou beest not charged of God, as once Ahab, for letting go this enemy now in thy hands, whom God hath appointed to destruction. Learn a little wisdom of the serpent's brood, who when they had Christ under their foot, never thought they had him sure enough; no, not when dead, and therefore both seal and watch his grave. Thus do thou to hinder the resurrection of thy sin, seal it down with stronger purposes, solemn covenants, and watch it by a wakeful circumspect walking.

Use 3. This is ground of consolation to the weak Christian, who disputes against the truth of his grace, from the inward conflicts and fightings he hath with his lusts, and is ready to say (like Gideon, in regard of outward enemies), *If God be with me, why is all this befallen me?* Why do I find such strugglings in me, provoking me to sin, pulling me back from that which is good? Why doest thou ask? The answer is soon given, because thou art a wrestler, not a conqueror. Thou mistakest the state of a Christian in this life; when one is made a Christian, he is not presently called to triumph over his slain enemies, but carried into the field to meet and fight them. The state of grace is the commencing of a war against sin, not the ending of it; rather than thou shalt not have an enemy to wrestle with, God himself will come in a disguise into the field, and appear to be thine enemy. Thus when Jacob was alone, a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day, and therefore set thy heart at rest if this be thy scruple: Thy soul may rather take comfort in this, that thou art a wrestler; this struggling within thee, if upon the right ground, and to

the right end, doth evidence there are two natures within thee, two contrary natures, the one from earth, earthly; and the other from heaven, heavenly; yea, for thy further comfort, know, though thy corrupt nature be the elder, yet it shall serve the younger.

Use 4. O how should this make thee (Christian) long to be gone home, where there is none of all this stir and scuffle! 'Tis strange, that every hour seems not a day, and every day a year, till death sounds that joyful retreat, and calls thee off the field, where the bullets fly so thick, and thou art fighting for thyself with thy deadly enemies, to come to court, where no swords, but palms are seen in the saints hands; no drums, but harps; no groans of bleeding soldiers and wounded consciences, but sweet and ravishing music is heard of triumphing victors, caroling the praises of God and the Lamb, through whom they have overcome. Well, Christians, while you are below, comfort yourselves with these things; there is a place of rest remains for the people of God: You do not beat the air, but wrestle for a heaven that is yonder above these clouds; you have your worst first, the best will follow. You wrestle but to win a crown, and win to wear it, yea wear, never to lose it, which once on, none shall take it off, or put you to the hazard of a battle more. Here we overcome to fight again; the battle of one temptation may be over, but the war remains. What peace can we have, so long as devils can come abroad out of their holes, or any thing of sinful nature remains in ourselves unmortified? which will even fight upon its knees, and strike with one arm while the other is cut off; but when death comes, the last stroke is struck; this good physician will perfectly cure thee of thy spiritual blindness and lameness (as the martyr told his fellow at the stake, bloody Bonner would do their bodies.) What is it, Christian, which takes away the joy of thy life, but the wrestlings and combats which this bosom enemy puts thee to? Is not this the *Peninnah*, that, vexing and disturbing thy spirit, hath kept thee off many a sweet meal thou mightest have had in communion with God and his saints; or if thou hast come, hath made thee cover the altar of God with thy tears and groans? And will it not be a happy hand that cuts the knot, and sets thee loose from thy deadness, hypocrisy, pride, and what not, wherewith thou wert yoked? It is life which is thy loss, and death which is thy gain. Be but willing to endure the rending of the vail of thy flesh, and thou art where thou wouldst be, out of the reach of sin, at rest in the bosom of thy God. And why should a short evil of pain affright thee more, than the deliverance from a continual torment of sin's evil ravish thee? Some you know have chosen to be cut, rather than to be pained daily with the stone, and yet, may be, their pain comes again; and

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canst thou not quietly think of dying to be delivered from the torment of thy sins, never to return more; and yet that is not the half that death doth for thee: Peace is sweet after war, ease after pain: but what tongue can express what joy, what glory must fill the creature at the first sight of God, and that blessed company? None but one that dwells there can tell. Did we know more of that blissful state, we ministers would find it as hard a work to persuade Christians to be willing to live here so long, as now it is to persuade them to be willing to die so soon.

CHAP. II.

Wherein is shewed what is meant by Flesh and Blood; *how the Christian doth not, and how he doth wrestle against the same.*

SECT. I.—NOW follows the description of the saints enemies, with whom he is to wrestle.

First, Described negatively, *Not with flesh and blood.*

Secondly, Positively, *But against principalties and powers, &c.*

First, For the negative part of the description; we are not to take it for a pure negation, as if we had no conflict with flesh and blood, but wholly and solely to engage against satan; but by way of comparison, not only with flesh and blood, and in some sense not chiefly. It is usual in scripture such manner of phrases, Luke xiv. 12. *Call not thy friends to dinner, but the poor;* that is, not those only, so as to neglect the poor. Now what is meant here by flesh and blood? There is a double interpretation of the words.

First, By flesh and blood may be meant our bosom corruptions; that sin which is in our corrupt nature so oft called flesh in the scripture; *The flesh lusteth against the spirit,* and sometimes flesh and blood, as Matt. xvi. 17. *Flesh and blood hath not revealed this;* that is, this confession thou hast made comes from above: thy fleshly corrupt mind could never have found out this supernatural truth, thy sinful will would never have embraced it. So, 1 Cor. xv. 20. *Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God;* that is, sinful mortal flesh, as it is expounded in the words following. So, Gal. i. 11. *I consulted not with flesh and blood;* that is, carnal reason. Now this bosom enemy may be called flesh, partly from its derivation, and partly from its operation: from its derivation, because it is derived and propagated to us by natural generation; thus Adam is said to beget *a son in his own likeness,* sinful as he was, as well as mortal and miserable; yea, the holiest saint on earth, having flesh in him, derives this

corrupt and sinful nature to his child, as the circumcised Jew begat an uncircumcised child; and the wheat cleansed and fanned (being sown) comes up with a husk, John iii. 6. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh.*

Secondly, It is called flesh, from the operations of this corrupt nature, which are fleshly and carnal. The reasonings of the corrupt mind are fleshly, therefore called the carnal mind, incapable indeed of the things of God, which it neither doth nor can perceive; as the sun doth *obsignare superiora dum revelat inferiora*, hide the heavens which are above it from us, while it reveals things beneath; so carnal reason leaves the creature in the dark, concerning spiritual truths, when it is most able to conceive and discourse of creature-excellencies, and carnal interests here below. What a childish question, for so wise a man, did Nicodemus put to Christ? though Christ to help him did wrap his speech in a carnal phrase. If fleshly reason cannot understand spiritual truths when thus accommodated, and the notions of the gospel translated into its own language, what skill is it like to have of them, if put to read them in their original tongue? I mean, if this garment of carnal expression were taken off, and spiritual truths in their naked hue presented to its view. The motions of the natural will are carnal, and therefore, Rom. viii. 5. *They that are after the flesh,* are said to *mind the things of the flesh.* All its desires, delights, cares, fears, are in and of carnal things; it savours spiritual food no more than an angel fleshly. *Omnis vita gustu ducitur:* What we cannot relish, we will hardly make our daily food. Every creature hath its proper diet; the lion eats not grass, nor the horse flesh; what is food to the carnal heart, is poison to the gracious, and that which is pleasing to the gracious, is distasteful to the carnal. Now, according to this interpretation, the sense of the apostle is not, as if the Christian had no combat with his corrupt nature (for in another place it is said, the spirit lusts against the flesh, and the flesh against the spirit, and this enemy is called the sin that besets the Christian round), but to aggravate his conflict with this enemy by the access of a foreign power, satan, who strikes in with this domestic enemy; as if while a king is fighting with his own mutinous subjects, some out-landish troops should join with them, now he may be said not to fight with his subjects, but with a foreign power. The Christian wrestles not with his naked corruptions, but with satan in them; were there no devil, yet we should have our hands full in resisting the corruptions of our own hearts; but the access of this enemy makes the battle more terrible, because he heeds them who is a captain so skilful and experienced. Our sin is the engine, satan is the engineer, lust the bait, satan the angler: When a soul is enticed by his own lust, he is said to be tempted,

Jam. i. 14. because both satan and our own lust concur to the completing the sin.

Use. First, Let this make thee, Christian, ply the work of mortification close; it is no policy to let thy lusts have arms, who are sure to rise and declare against thee when thine enemy comes. Achish's nobles did but wisely, in that they would not trust David in their army when to fight against Israel, lest in the battle he should be an adversary to them: And darest thou go to duty, or engage in any action, where satan will appear against thee, and not endeavour to make sure of thy pride, unbelief, &c. that they join not with thine enemy?

Secondly, Are satan and thine own flesh against thee, not single corruption, but edged with his policy, and backed by his power? See then what need thou hast of more help than thy own grace: take heed of grappling with him in the strength of thy naked grace; here thou hast two to one against thee. Satan was too hard for Adam, though he went so well appointed into the field, because left to himself; much more easily will he foil thee; cling therefore about thy God for strength, get him with thee, and then, though a worm, thou shalt be able to deal with this serpent.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Flesh and blood is interpreted as a *periphrasis* of man. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, that is, not with man, who is here described by that part which chiefly distinguisheth him from the angelical nature: *Touch me*, saith Christ, *and handle me, a spirit hath not flesh.* Now, according to this interpretation, observe:

First, How meanly the Spirit of God speaks of man.

Secondly, Where he lays the stress of the saints' battle, not in resisting flesh and blood, but principalities and powers; where the apostle excludes not our cement with man, for the war is against the serpent and his seed. As wide as the world is, it cannot peaceably hold the saints and wicked together; but his intent is to shew, what a complicated enemy (man's wrath and satan's interwoven together) we have to deal with.

First, For the first, How meanly doth the Spirit of God speak of man, calling him flesh and blood? Man hath a heaven-born soul, which makes him a-kin to angels, yea, to the God of them who is the Father of Spirits; but that is passed by in silence, as if God would not own that which is tainted with sin, and not the creature God at first made it; or because the soul, though of such noble extraction, yet being so immersed in sensuality, deserves no other name than flesh, which part of man levels him with the beast, and is here intended to express the weakness and frailty of man's nature. It is the phrase which the Holy Ghost expresseth the weakness and impotency of a creature by, Isa. xxxi. 3. *They are men, and their horses are flesh*, that is, weak; as on the contrary,

contrary, when he would set out the power and strength of a thing, he opposeth it to flesh, 2 Cor. x. 3. *Our weapons are not carnal, but mighty*; and so in the text, not flesh and blood, but powers: as if he should say, Had you no other to fear but a weak sorry man, it were not worth the providing arms or ammunition; but you have enemies that neither are flesh, nor are resisted with flesh; so that here we see what a weak creature man is, not only weaker than angels, as they are spirits, and he flesh, but in some sense beneath the beasts, as the flesh of man is frailer than the flesh of beasts; therefore the Spirit of God compares man to the *grass* which soon *withers*, Isa. xl. 6. and his *goodliness to the flower of the field.* Yea, he is called vanity, Psal. lxii. 9. *Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie*, both alike vain; only the rich and great man, his vanity is covered with honour, wealth, &c. which are here called a lie, because they are not what they seem, and so worse than plain vanity, which is known to be so, and deceives not.

Use. First, Is man but frail flesh? Let this humble thee, O man, in all thy excellency; flesh is but one remove from filth and corruption; thy soul is the salt that keeps thee sweet, or else thou wouldst stink above ground. Is it thy beauty thou pridest in? Flesh is grass, but beauty is the vanity of this vanity. This goodliness is like the flower, which lasts not so long as the grass, appears in its month, and is gone; yea, like the beauty of the flower, which fades while the flower stands. How soon will time's plough make furrows in thy face; yea, one fit of an ague so change thy countenance, as shall make thy doting lovers afraid to look on thee? Is it strength? Alas, it is an arm of flesh, which withers often in the stretching forth; 'ere long thy blood which is now warm, will freeze in thy veins; thy spring crowned with May buds, will tread on December's heel; thy marrow dry in thy bones, thy sinews shrink, thy legs bow under the weight of thy body, thy eye-strings crack, thy tongue not able to cry for help; yea, thy heart with thy flesh shall fail; and now thou who art such a giant, take a turn if thou canst in thy chamber, yea, raise thy head from the pillow if thou art able, or call back thy breath, which is making haste to be gone out of thy nostrils, never to return more; and darest thou glory in that which so soon may be prostrate?

Is it wisdom? The same grave that covers thy body shall bury all that (the wisdom of thy flesh I mean); all thy thoughts shall perish, and thy goodly plots come to nothing. Indeed if a Christian, thy thoughts as such shall ascend with thee, not one holy breathing of thy soul lost. Is it thy blood and birth? Whoever thou art, thou art base born till born again; the same blood runs in thy veins with the beggar in the street, Acts xvii. 26. All nations

tions there we find made of the same blood: in two things all are alike, we come in and go out of the world alike; as one is not made of finer earth, so not resolved into purer dust.

Use 2. Secondly, Is man flesh? Trust not in man; *cursed be he that makes flesh his arm:* not in the mighty man; robes may hide and garnish, they cannot change flesh, Psal. cxlvi. *Put not your trust in princes;* alas, they cannot keep their crowns on their own heads, their heads on their own shoulders, and lookest thou for that which they cannot give themselves? Not in wise men, whose designs recoil oft upon themselves, that they cannot perform their enterprise. *Amphora cœpit institui currente rota cur urceus exit.* Man's carnal wisdom intends one thing, but God turns the wheel, and brings forth another. Trust not in holy men; they have flesh, and so their judgment not infallible, yea, their way sometimes doubtful. His mistake may lead thee aside; and though he returns, thou mayest go on and perish. Trust not in any man, in all men, no not in thyself, thou art flesh. *He is a fool* (saith the wise man) *that trusts his heart.* Not in the best thou art or doest, the garment of thy righteousness is spotted with the flesh; all is counted by Saint Paul, *confidence in the flesh*, besides our rejoicing in Christ, Phil. iii. 3.

Use 3. Thirdly, Fear no man, he is but flesh. This was David's resolve, Psal. lvi. 4. *I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.* Thou needest not, thou oughtest not to fear. Thou needest not. What not such a great man, nor such a number of men, who have the keys of all the prisons at their girdle, who can kill or save alive? No, not these, only look they be thy enemies for righteousness sake. Take heed thou makest not the least child thine enemy, by offering wrong to him: God will right the wicked even upon the saint. If he offends, he shall find no shelter under God's wing for his sin. This made Jerome complain, that the Christian's sin made the arms of those barbarous nations which invaded Christendom victorious: *Nostris peccatis fortes sunt barbari.* But if man's wrath find thee in God's way, and his fury take fire at thy holiness, thou needest not fear though thy life be the prey he haunts for. Flesh can only wound flesh, he may kill thee, but not hurt thee. Why shouldst thou fear to be stript of that which thou hast resigned already to Christ? 'Tis the first lesson thou learnest, if a Christian, to deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow thy master, so that the enemy comes too late; thou hast no life to lose, because thou hast given it already to Christ; nor can man take away that without God's leave; all thou hast is insured; and though God hath not promised thee immunity from suffering in this kind, yet he hath undertaken to bear the loss, yea, to pay thee an hundred fold, and thou shalt not stay for it till another world. Again, thou oughtest not to fear

flesh.

flesh. Our Saviour, Matth. x. thrice in the compass of six verses, commands us not to fear man; if thy heart quakes at him, how wilt thou behave thyself in the list against satan, whose little finger is heavier than man's loins? The Romans had *arma prælusoria*, weapons rebated or cudgels, which they were tried at before they came to the sharp. If thou canst not bear a bruise in thy flesh from man's cudgels and blunt weapon, what wilt thou do when thou shalt have satan's sword in thy side? God counts himself reproached when his children fear a sorry man; therefore we are bid sanctify the Lord, and not to fear their fear. Now if thou wouldst not fear man who is but flesh, labour,

First, To mortify thy own flesh; flesh only fears flesh: when the soul degenerates into carnal desires and delights, no wonder he falls into carnal fears. Have a care, Christian, thou bringest not thyself into bondage: perhaps thy heart feeds on the applause of man: this will make thee afraid to be evil spoken of, as those who shuffled with Christ, John xii. 42. owning him in private, when they durst not confess him openly, for they loved the praise of men. David saith, *The mouth of the wicked is an open sepulchre;* and in this grave hath many a saint's name been buried. But if this fleshly desire were mortified, thou wouldst not pass to be judged by man, and so of all carnal affections. Some meat you observe is aguish; if thou settest thy heart on any thing that is carnal, wife, child, estate, &c. these will incline thee to a base fear of man, who may be God's messenger to afflict thee in these.

Secondly, Set faith against flesh. Faith fixeth the heart, and a fixed heart is not readily afraid. Physicians tell us, we are never so subject to receive infection as when the spirits are low, and therefore the antidotes they give are all cordials. When the spirit is low through unbelief, every threatening from man makes sad impression. Let thy faith but take a deep draught of the promises, and thy courage will rise.

Fourthly, Comfort thyself, Christian, with this, that as thou art flesh, so thy heavenly Father knows it, and considers thee for it.

First, In point of affliction, Psal. ciii. 14. *He knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are but dust.* Not like some unskilled empiric, who hath but one receipt for all, strong or weak, young or old, but as a wise physician he considers his patient, and then writes his bill: Men and devils are but God's apothecaries, they make not our physic, but give what God prescribes. Balaam loved Balak's fee well enough, but could not go an hair's breadth beyond God's commission. Indeed God is not so choice with the wicked. Isa. xxvii. 7. *Hath he not smitten him as he smote those that smote him?* In a saint's cup the poison of the affliction is corrected; not so in the wicked's; and therefore what is medicine to the one, is ruin to the other.

Secondly,

Secondly, In duty; he knows you are but flesh, and therefore pities and accepts thy weak service, yea, he makes apologies for thee: *The spirit is willing*, saith Christ, *but the flesh is weak.*

Thirdly, In temptations he considers thou art flesh, and proportions the temptation to so weak a nature: such a temptation as is common to man, a moderate temptation (as in the margin) fitted for so frail a creature. Whenever the Christian begins to faint under the weight of it, God makes as much haste to his succour, as a tender mother would to her swooning child; therefore he is said to be nigh to revive such, lest their spirits should fail.

SECT. III.—The second thing follows: the conjuncture of the saint's enemies: we have not to do with naked man, but with man led on by satan; not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers acting in them. There are two sorts of men the Christian wrestles with, good men and bad; satan strikes in with both.

First, The Christian wrestles with good men. Many a sharp conflict there hath been between saint and saint, scuffling in the dark, through misunderstanding of the truth, and each other: Abraham and Lot, at strife. Aaron and Miriam jostled with Moses for the wall, till God interposed and ended the quarrel by his immediate stroke on Miriam. The apostles, even in the presence of their Master, were at high words, contesting who should be greatest. Now in these civil wars among saints, satan is the great kindle-coal, though little seen, because like Ahab he fights in a disguise, playing first on one side, and then on the other, aggravating every petty injury, and thereupon provoking to wrath and revenge; therefore the apostle dehorting from anger, useth this argument, *Give no place to the devil;* as if he had said, Fall not out among yourselves, except you long for the devil's company, who is the true soldier of fortune (as the common phrase is), living by his sword, and therefore hastes thither where there is any hopes of war. Gregory compares the saints in their sad differences to two cocks, which satan the master of the pit sets on fighting, in hope, when killed, to sup upon them at night. Solomon saith, Prov. xviii. 6. *The mouth of the contentious man calls for strokes.* Indeed we by our mutual strifes give the devil a staff to beat us with; he cannot well work without fire, and therefore blows up these coals of contention, which he useth as his forge, to heat our spirits into wrath, and then we are malleable, easily hammered as he pleaseth. Contention puts the soul into disorder, and *inter arma silent leges.* The law of grace acts not freely, when the spirit is in a commotion; meek Moses provoked speaks unadvisedly. Methinks this (if nothing else will) should sound a retreat to our unhappy differences, that this Joab hath a hand in them; he sets this evil spirit between brethren,

thren, and what folly is it to bite and devour one another, to make hell sport? We are prone to mistake our heat for zeal, whereas commonly in strifes between saints, it is a fire-ship sent in by satan to break their unity and order; wherein while they stand, they are an armada invincible; and satan knows he hath no other way but this to shatter them; when the Christian's language which should be one, begins to be confounded, they are then near scattering; 'tis time for God to part his children, when they cannot live in peace together.

Secondly, The Christian wrestles with wicked men. *Because you are not of the world,* saith Christ, *the world hates you.* The saint's nature and life are antipodes to the world; fire and water, heaven and hell, may as soon be reconciled as they with it. The heretic is his enemy for truth's sake, the prophane for holiness; to both the Christian is an abomination, as the Israelite to the Egyptian; hence come wars; the fire of persecution never goes out in the hearts of the wicked, who say in their hearts as they once with their lips, *Christiani ad leones.* Now in all the saints wars with the wicked, satan is commander in chief; 'tis their father's works they do, his lusts they fulfil. The Sabeans plundered Job, but went on satan's errand. The heretic broacheth corrupt doctrine, perverts the faith of many, but in that he is the minister of satan, 2 Cor. xi. 15. They have their call, their wiles and wages from him. Persecutors, their work ascribed to hell; Is it a persecution of the tongue? 'Tis hell sets on fire: Is it of the hand? Still they are but the devil's instruments, Rev. ii. 10. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison.*

Use 1. First, Do you see any driving furiously against the truths or servants of Christ? O pity them as the most miserable wretches in the world, fear not their power, admire not their parts; they are men possessed of and acted by the devil, they are his drudges and slaughter-slaves, as a martyr called them. Augustine, in his epistle to Lycinius, one of excellent parts, but wicked, who once was his scholar, speaks thus pathetically to him: O how I could weep and mourn over thee, to see such a sparkling wit prostituted to the devil's service! If thou hadst found a golden chalice, thou wouldst have given it to the church; but God hath given thee a golden head, parts and wit, and in this *propinas teipsum diabolo,* thou drinkest thyself to the devil. When you see men of power or parts using them against God that gave them, weep over them; better they had lived and died, the one slaves, and the other fools, than do the devil such service with them.

Use 2. Secondly, O ye saints, when reproached and persecuted, look further than man, spend not your wrath upon him; alas! they are but instruments in the devil's hand: save your displeasure

displeasure for satan, who is thy chief enemy: these may be won to Christ's side, and so become thy friends at last. Now and then we see some running away from the devil's colours, and washing the wound with their tears, which they have made by their cruelty. 'Tis a notable passage in Anselm, who compares the heretic and persecutor to the horse, and the devil to the rider. Now, saith he, in battle, when the enemy comes riding up, the valiant soldier, he is angry not with the horse, but horsemen; he labours to kill the man, that he may possess the horse for his use. Thus we do with the wicked; we are not to bend our wrath against them, but satan that rides them, and spurs them on, labouring by prayer for them as Christ did on the cross, to dismount the devil, that so these miserable souls hackneyed by him may be delivered from him. 'Tis more honour to take one soul alive out of the devil's clutches, than to leave many slain upon the field. Erasmus saith of Augustine, that he begged the lives of those heretics at the hands of the emperor's officers, who had been bloody persecutors of the orthodox: *Cupiebat*, saith he, *amicus medicus superesse, quos arte sua sanaret*: Like a kind physician he desired their life, that if possible he might work a cure on them, and make them sound in the faith.

CHAP. II.

Wherein is shewn what a Principality Satan hath, how he came to be such a Prince, and how we may know whether we be under him as our Prince, or not.

VERSE 12. *But against Principalities and Powers, &c.*

SECT. I.—THE apostle having shewn what the saints enemies are not, *flesh and blood*, frail men, who cannot come but they are seen; who may be resisted with man's power, or escape by flight: now he describes them positively, *against principalities and powers, &c.* Some think the apostle, by these diverse names and titles, intends to set forth the distinct orders, whereby the devils are subordinate one to another; so they make the devil, v. 11. to be the head or monarch, and these, v. 12. so many inferior orders, as among men there are princes, dukes, earls, &c. under an emperor. That there is an order among the devils cannot be denied. The scripture speaks of a *prince of devils*, Matth. ix. and of the *devil and his angels*, who with him fell from their first station; called his angels, as it is probably conceived, because one above the rest (as the head of the faction) drew

drew with him multitudes of others into his party, who with him sinned and fell. But that there should be so many distinct orders among them, as there are several branches in this description, is not probable; too weak a notion to be the foundation of a pulpit discourse, therefore we shall take them as meant of the devil collectively. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but devils, who are principalities, powers, &c. and not distributively, to make principalities one rank, powers another; for some of these branches cannot be meant of distinct orders, but promiscuously of all, as spiritual wickedness; it being not proper to one to be spirits or wicked, but common to all.

First, Then, the devil or whole pack of them are here described by their government in this world, *Principalities.*

Secondly, By their strength and puissance, called *Powers.*

Thirdly, By their nature in their substance and degeneracy, *Spiritual wickedness.*

Fourthly, In their kingdom or proper territories, *Rulers of the darkness of this world.*

Fifthly, By the ground of the war, *In heavenly places, or about heavenly things.*

First, Of the first, *Principalities;* the abstract for the concrete, that is, such as have a principality; so Titus iii. 1. We are bid to be *subject to principalities and powers,* that is, princes and rulers, so the vulgar reads it. We wrestle against princes; which some will have to express the eminency of their nature above man's, that as the state and spirit of princes is more raised than others, great men have great spirits, as Zeba and Zalmunna to Gideon, asking who they were they slew at Tabor: *As thou art,* say they, *so were they, each one resembled the children of a king,* that is, for majesty and presence beseeming a princely race; so they think the eminent nature of angels here to be intended, who are so far above the highest prince, as he above the basest peasant; but because they are described by their nature in the fourth branch, I shall subscribe to their judgment who take this for the principality of government which the devil exerciseth in this lower world; and the note shall be,

Doct. That satan is a great prince; Christ himself stiles him *the prince of the world,* John xiv. Princes have their thrones where they sit in state; satan hath his, Rev. ii. 13. *Thou dwellest where satan hath his throne;* and that such a one as no earthly prince may compare: few kings are enthroned in the hearts of their subjects; they rule their bodies, and command their purses, but how often in a day are they pulled out of their thrones by the wishes of their discontented subjects! but satan hath the hearts of all his subjects. Princes have their homage and peculiar honour done to them; satan is served upon the knee

of

of his subjects, the wicked is said to *worship the devil*, Rev. xiii. 4. No prince expects such worship as he; no less than religious worship will serve him, 2 Chron. xi. 15. Jeroboam there is said to ordain priests for devils, and therefore he is called not only the prince, but the God of this world, because he hath the worship of a God given him. Princes, such as are absolute, have a legislative power; nay, their own will is their law, as at this day in Turkey, where their laws are writ in no other tables than in the proud sultan's breast; thus satan gives law to the poor sinner, who is bound, and must obey, though the law be writ with his own blood, and the creature hath nothing but damnation for fulfilling the devil's lust; 'tis called *a law of sin*, Rom. viii. 2. because it comes with authority; princes have their ministers of state, whom they employ for the safety and enlargement of their territories: So satan his, 2 Cor. xi. 15. who propagate his cursed designs; therefore we read of *doctrines of devils*. Princes have their state secrets, which none know but a few favourites in whom they confide: thus the devil hath his mysteries of iniquity, and depths of satan we read of, which all his subjects know not of, Rev. ii. 24. These are imparted to a few favourites, such as Elymas, whom Paul calls *full of all subtilty, and child of the devil;* such, whose consciences are so debauched, that they scruple not the most horrid sins; these are his white boys: I have read of a people in America, that love meat best when 'tis rotten and stinks. The devil is of their diet; the more corrupt and rotten the creature is in sin, the better he pleaseth his tooth; some are more the children of the devil than others. Christ had his beloved disciple; and satan those that lie in his very bosom, and know what is in his heart. In a word, princes have their *vectigalia*, their tribute, and custom; so satan his. Indeed he doth not so much as share with the sinner in all, but is owner of all he hath; so that the devil is the merchant, and the sinner but the broker to trade for him, who at last puts all his gains into the devil's purse; time, strength, yea, conscience and all are spent to keep him on his throne.

SECT. II.—*Quest. But how comes satan to his principality?*

Ans. Not lawfully, though he can shew a fair claim. As,

First, He obtained it by conquest; as he won his crown, so he wears it by power and policy. But conquest is a cracked title. A thief is not the honester, because able to force the traveller to deliver his purse; and a thief on the throne is no better than a private one on the road, or pirate in a pinnace, as he boldly told Alexander. Neither doth that prove good with process of time, which was evil at first: Satan indeed hath kept possession long, but a thief will be so as long as he keeps his

stolen goods; he stole the heart of Adam from God at first, and doth no better to this day. Christ's conquest is good, because the ground of the war is righteous, to recover what was his own; but satan cannot say of the meanest creature, *'Tis my own.*

Secondly, Satan may lay claim to his principality by election; 'tis true, he came by a wile, but now he is a prince elect, by the unanimous choice of corrupt nature; *ye are of your father the devil,* saith Christ, *and his lusts ye will do.* But this also hath a flaw in it: for man, by law of creation, is God's subject, and cannot give away God's right; by sin he loseth his right in God as a protector, but God loseth not his right as a sovereign. Sin disabled man to keep God's law, but it doth not enfranchise or discharge him, that he need not keep it.

Thirdly, Satan may claim a deed of gift from God himself, as he was bold to do to Christ himself upon this ground, persuading him to worship him as the prince of the world, Luke iv. 5, 6. *He shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world, saying, All this will I give thee, for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will, I give it.* Where there was a truth, though he spake more than the truth (as he cannot speak truth, but to gain credit to some lie at the end of it.) God indeed hath delivered, in a sense, this world to him, but not in his sense, to do what he will with it, nor by any approbatory act given him a patent to vouch him his viceroy; not satan by the *grace* of God, but by the *permission* of God, prince of the world.

Quest. But why doth God permit this apostate creature to exercise such a principality over the world?

Ans. First, As a righteous act of vengeance on man, for revolting from the sweet government of his rightful Lord and Maker; 'tis the way that God punisheth rebellion: *Because ye would not serve me with gladness, in the abundance of all things, therefore ye shall serve your enemies in hunger, &c.* Satan is is a king given in God's wrath. Ham's curse is man's punishment, *a servant of servants.* The devil is God's slave, man the devil's. Sin hath set the devil on the creature's back, and now he hurries him without mercy (as he did the swine), till he be choked with flame, if mercy interpose not.

Secondly, God permits this his principality, in order to the glorifying of his name in the recovery of his elect from the power of this great potentate. What a glorious name will God have when he hath finished this war, wherein at first he found all possessed by this enemy, and not a man of all the sons of Adam to offer himself as a volunteer in this service, till made willing by the day of his power? This, this will gain God a name above every name, not only of creatures, but of those by which himself was known to his creature. The workmanship of heaven and earth

give

give him the name of Creator; providence, of Preserver; but this, of Saviour: wherein he doth both the former, preserve his creature, which else had been lost, and create a new creature; I mean the babe of grace, which, through God, shall be able to beat the devil out of the field, who was able to drive Adam, though created in his full stature, out of paradise; and may not all the other works of God empty themselves as rivers into the sea, losing their names, or rather swelling into one of redemption? Had not satan taken God's elect prisoners, they would not have gone to heaven with such acclamations of triumph. There are three expressions of great joy in scripture, the joy of a woman after her travail, the joy of harvest, and the joy of him that divideth the spoil; the exultation of all these is wrought upon a sad ground; many a pain and tear it costs the travailing woman, many a fear the husbandman, perils and wounds the soldier, before they come at their joy, but at last are paid for all, the remembrance of their past sorrows feeding their present joys. Had Christ come and entered into affinity with our nature, and returned peaceably to heaven with his spouse, finding no resistance: though this would have been admirable love, and that would have afforded true joy of marriage, yet this way of carrying his saints to heaven will heighten the joy, as it adds to the nuptial song the triumph of a conqueror, who hath rescued his bride out of the hands of satan, as he was leading her to the chambers of hell.

SECT. III.—*Use* 1. Is satan such a prince? Try whose subject thou art. His empire is large; only a few privileged, who are translated into the kingdom of God's dear son; even in Christ's own territories (visible church I mean), where his name is professed, and the sceptre of his gospel held forth, there satan hath his subjects. As Christ had his saints in Nero's court; so the devil his servants in the outward court of his visible church. Thou must therefore have something more to exempt thee from this government, than living within the pale, and giving an outward conformity to the ordinances of Christ; satan will yield to this, and be no loser: as a king lets his merchants trade to, yea, live in a foreign kingdom, and while they are there learn the language, and observe the customs of the place; this breaks not their allegiance: nor all that thy loyalty to satan. When a statute was made in Queen Elizabeth's reign, that all should come to the church, the papists sent to Rome to know the Pope's pleasure; he returned them this answer, (it is said,) *Bid the Catholics in England give me their heart, and let the Queen take the rest.* His subject thou art whom thou crownest in thy heart, and not whom thou flatterest with thy lips.

But to bring the trial to an issue, know, thou belongest to one of these, and but to one; Christ and satan divide the whole

world; Christ will bear no equal, and satan no superior; and therefore hold in with both thou canst not. Now if thou sayest Christ is thy prince, answer to these interrogatories.

First, How came he into the throne? Satan had once the quiet possession of thy heart: thou wast by birth, as the rest of thy neighbours, satan's vassal, yea, hast oft vouched him in the course of thy life to be thy liege lord; how then comes this great change? Satan sure would not of his own accord resign his crown and sceptre to Christ; and as for thyself, thou wert neither willing to renounce, nor able to resist his power: this then must only be the fruits of Christ's victorious arms, whom *God hath exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour*, Acts v. 31. Speak therefore, hath Christ come to thee as once Abraham to Lot, when prisoner to Kederlaomer, rescuing thee out of satan's hands, as he was leading thee in chains of lust into hell? Didst thou ever hear a voice from heaven in the ministry of the word calling out to thee, as once to Saul, so as to lay thee at God's foot, and make thee face about for heaven, to strike thee blind in thine own apprehension, who before had a good opinion of thy state, to tame and weaken thee; so as now thou art willing to be led by the hand of a child after Christ? Did ever Christ come to thee, as the angel to Peter in prison, rousing thee up, and not only causing the chains of darkness and stupidity to fall off thy mind and conscience, but make thee obedient also, that the iron gate of thy will hath opened to Christ before he left thee? Then thou hast something to say for thy freedom. But if in all this I be a barbarian, and the language I speak be strange, thou knowest no such work to have passed upon thy spirit, then thou art yet in thy old prison. Can there be a change of government in a nation by a conqueror that invades it, and his subjects not hear of this? one king enthroned, and another crowned in thy soul, and thou hear no scuffle all this while? The regenerating spirit is compared to the wind, John iii. 8.; his first attempts on the soul may be so secret, that the creature knows not whence they come, or whence they tend; but before he hath done, the sound will be heard throughout the soul, so as it cannot but see a great change in itself, and say, I that was blind, now I see; I that was as hard as ice, now relenting for sin; now my heart gives, I can melt and mourn for it. I that was well enough without a Christ, yea, did wonder what others saw in him, to make such ado for him, now have changed my note with the *daughters of Jerusalem;* and, for *what* is your beloved? (as I scornfully have asked) I have learned to ask *where* he is, that I might seek him with you. O soul! canst thou say 'tis thus with thee? thou mayest know who has been here, no less than Christ; who, by his victorious spirit,

hath

hath translated thee from satan's power into his own sweet kingdom.

Secondly, Whose law dost thou freely subject thyself unto? The laws of these princes are as contrary as their natures; the one a law of sin, Rom. viii. 2. the other a law of holiness, Rom. vii. 12.: and therefore if sin hath not so far bereaved thee of thy wits, as not to know sin from holiness, thou mayest (except resolved to cheat thy own soul) soon be resolved; confess therefore, and give glory to God. To which of these laws doth thy soul set its seal? When satan sends out his proclamation, and bids, Sinner, go, set thy foot upon such a command of God, observe what is thy behaviour; doest thou yield thyself, as Paul phraseth it, Rom. vi. 16. a metaphor from princes' servants, or others, who are said to present themselves before their Lord, as ready and at hand to do their pleasure; by which the apostle elegantly describes the forwardness of the sinner's heart to come to satan's foot, if he knock or call: now doth thy soul go out thus to meet thy lust (as Aaron his brother), glad to see its face in an occasion? Thou art not brought over to sin with much ado, but thou likest the command; *Transgress at Gilgal* (saith God), *this liketh you well*, Hos. vi. 6. As a courtier, who doth not only obey, but thank his prince that he will employ him. Needest thou be long in resolving whose thou art? Did ever any question, whether those were Jeroboam's subjects who willingly followed his command? Hos. v. 11. Alas for thee, thou art under the power of satan, tied by a chain stronger than brass or iron: Thou lovest thy lust. A saint may be for a time under a force, *sold under sin*, as the apostle bemoans, and therefore glad when deliverance comes, but thou sellest thyself to work iniquity. If Christ should come to take thee from thy lusts, thou wouldest whine after them, as Micah after his gods.

Thirdly, To whom goest thou for protection? As it belongs to the prince to protect his subjects, so princes expect their subjects should trust them with their safety; the very bramble bids, Judg. ix. 15. *If in truth ye anoint me king, then put your trust under my shadow.* Now who hath thy confidence? Darest thou trust God with thy soul, and the affairs of it in well-doing? Good subjects follow their calling, commit state matters to the wisdom of their prince and his counsel; when wronged, they appeal to their prince in his laws for right; and when they do offend their prince, they submit to the penalty of the law; and bear his displeasure patiently, till humbling themselves, they recover his favour, and do not in a discontent fall to open rebellion. Thus a gracious soul follows his Christian calling, committing himself to God as a faithful creator, to be ordered by his wise providence. If he meets with violence from any, he scorns to beg aid of the

devil to help him, or be his own judge to right himself: no, he acquiesceth in the counsel and comfort the word of God gives him. If himself offends, and so comes under the lash of God's correcting hand, he doth not then take up rebellious arms against God, and refuse to receive correction, but saith, *Why should a living man complain? A man for the punishment of his sin?* whereas a naughty heart dares not venture his estate, life, credit, or any thing he hath with God in well-doing; he thinks he shall be undone presently, if he sits still under the shadow of God's promise for protection; and therefore he runs from God as from under an old house that would fall on his head, and lays the weight of his confidence in wicked policy, making lies his refuge; like Israel, *he trusts in perverseness.* When God tells him, *In returning and rest he shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be his strength;* he hath not faith to take God's word for his security in ways of obedience. And when God comes to afflict him for any disloyal carriage, instead of accepting the punishment for his sin, and so to own him for his sovereign Lord, that he may righteously punish the faults of his disobedient subjects, his heart is filled with rage against God, and instead of waiting quietly and humbly (like a good subject) till God upon his repentance receives him into his favour, his wretched heart (presenting God as an enemy to him) will not suffer any such gracious or amiable thought of God to dwell in his bosom, but bids him look for no good at his hand. *This evil is of the Lord; why should I wait on the Lord any longer?* Whereas a gracious heart is most encouraged to wait from this very consideration that drives the other way; because 'tis the Lord afflicts, Micah vii. 6.

4thly, Whom dost thou sympathize with? He is thy prince, whose victories and losses thou layest to heart, whether in thy own bosom, or abroad in the world. What saith thy soul, when God hedgeth up thy way, and keeps thee from that sin which satan hath been soliciting for? If on Christ's side, thou wilt rejoice when thou art delivered out of a temptation, though it be by falling into an affliction; as David said of Abigail, so wilt thou here, Blessed be the ordinance, blessed be the providence, which kept me from sinning against my God; but if otherwise, thou wilt harbour a secret grudge against the word which stood in the way, and be discontented thy design took not. A naughty heart (like Amnon) pines until his lust hath vent. Again, what music do the achievements of Christ in the world make in thy ear? When thou hearest the gospel thrives, the blind see, the lame walk, the poor gospelized, doth thy spirit rejoice in that hour? If a saint, thou wilt, as God is thy father, rejoice thou hast more brethren born; as he is thy prince, that the multitude of his subjects increase:

increase: so when thou seest the plots of Christ's enemies discovered, powers defeated, canst thou go forth with the saints to meet King Jesus, and ring him out of the field with praises? Or do thy bells ring backward, and such news make thee haste, like Haman, mourning to thine house, there to empty thy spirit, swoln with rancour against his saints and truth? Or if thy policy can master thy passion so far, as to make fair weather in thy countenance, and suffer thee to join with the people of God in their acclamations of joy, yet then art thou a close mourner within, and likest the work no better than Haman did his office, in holding Mordecai's stirrup, who had rather have held the ladder: this speaks thee a certain enemy to Christ, how handsomely soever thou mayest carry it before men.

Secondly, Bless God, O ye saints, who upon the former trial can say, you are translated into the kingdom of Christ, and so delivered from the tyranny of this usurper: there are few but have some one gaudy day in a year, which they solemnize; some keep their birth-day, others their marriage; some their manumission from a cruel service, others their deliverance from some imminent danger; here is a mercy where all these meet. You may call it, as Adam did his wife, Chavah, the mother of all the living; every mercy riseth up and calls this blessed; this is thy birth-day; thou wert before, but begannest to live when Christ began to live in thee. The father of the prodigal dated his son's life from his return. *This my son was dead and is alive.* It is thy marriage day: *I have married you to one husband, even Christ Jesus,* saith Paul to the Corinthians. Perhaps thou hast enjoyed this thy husband's sweet company many a day, and had a numerous offspring of joys and comforts by thy fellowship with him, the thought of which cannot but endear him to thee, and make the day of thy espousals delightful to thy memory: It is thy manumission, then were the indentures cancelled, wherein thou wert bound to sin and satan: when the Son made thee free, thou becamest free indeed: Thou canst not say thou was born free, for thy father was a slave, nor that thou boughtest thy freedom with a sum, *By grace ye are saved.* Heaven is settled on thee in the promise, and thou not at charge so much as for the writing's drawing. All is done at Christ's cost, with whom God indented, and to whom he gave the promise of eternal life before the world began, as a free estate to settle upon every believing soul in the day they shall come to Christ, and receive him for their Prince and Saviour; so that from the hour thou didst come under Christ's shadow, all the fruit that grows on this tree of life is thine; with Christ, all that both worlds have, falls to thee; all is yours, because you are Christ's. O Christian, look upon thy self now, and bless thy God to see what a change there is made in thy

state, since that black and dismal time, when thou wast a slave to the prince of darkness; how couldst thou like thy old scullion's work again, or think of returning to thy house of bondage, now thou knowest the privileges of Christ's kingdom? Great princes, who from baseness and beggary have ascended to kingdoms and empires (to add to the joy of their present honour,) have delighted to speak often of their base birth, to go and see the mean cottages where they were first entertained, and had their birth and breeding, and the like. And 'tis not unuseful for the Christian to look in at the grate, to see the smoky hole where once he lay, to view the chains wherewith he was laden, and so to compare Christ's court and the devil's prison; the felicity of the one, and the horror of the other together. But when we do our best to affect our hearts with this mercy, by all the enhancing aggravations we can find out, alas! how little a portion of it shall we know here? This is a *nimium excellens*, which cannot be fully seen, unless it be by a glorified eye; how can it be fully known by us, where it cannot be fully enjoyed? Thou art translated into the kingdom of Christ, but thou art a great way from his court. That is kept in heaven, and that the Christian knows, as we do far countries which we never saw, only by map, or some rarities that are sent us as a taste of what grows there in abundance.

Use 3. Thirdly, This (Christian) calls for thy loyalty and faithful service to Christ, who hath saved thee from satan's bondage. Say, O ye saints, to Christ, as they to Gideon, Come thou and rule over us, for thou hast delivered us from the hand, not of Midian, but of satan. Who so able to defend thee from his wrath, as he who broke his power? Who like to rule thee so tenderly, as he that could not brook another's tyranny over thee? In a word, who hath right to thee besides him, who ventured his life to redeem thee? *That being delivered from all thine enemies, thou mayest serve him without fear, in holiness, all the days of thy life.* And were it no pity that Christ should take all this pains to lift up thy head from satan's house of bondage, and give thee a place among those in his own house, who are admitted to minister to him (which is the highest honour the nature of men or angels is capable of,) and that thou shouldest after all this be found to have a hand in any treasonable practice against thy dear Saviour? Surely Christ may think he hath deserved better at thy hands, if at none besides. Where shall a prince safely dwell, if not in the midst of his own courtiers? and those such who were all taken from chains and prisons to be thus preferred, the more to oblige them in his service? Let devils and devilish men do their own work, but let not thy hand (O Christian) be upon thy dear Saviour. But this is too little, to bid thee not play the traitor. If thou hast any loyal blood running in thy veins, thy own heart will smite

smite thee when thou rendest the least skirt of his holy law; thou canst as well carry burning coals in thy bosom, as hide any treason there against thy dear Sovereign. No; 'tis some noble enterprize I should have thee think upon, how thou mayest advance the name of Christ higher in thy heart, and world too, as much as in thee lies. O how kindly did God take it, that David (when peaceably set on his throne) was casting about, not that he might entertain himself with those pleasures which usually corrupt and debauch the court of princes in times of peace, but how he might shew zeal for God, in building a house for his worship, that had reared a throne for him, 2 Sam. vii. And is there nothing, Christian, thou canst think on, wherein thou mayest eminently be instrumental for God in thy generation? He is not a good subject that is always for what he can get from his prince, but never thinks what service he may do for him; nor he the true Christian, whose thoughts dwell more on his own happiness, than the honour of his God. If subjects might choose what life stands best for their own enjoyment, all would desire to live at court with their prince; but because the prince's honour is more to be valued than this, therefore noble spirits (to do their prince service) can deny themselves the delicacies of a court, to jeopard their lives in the field, and thank their prince too for the honour of their employment. Blessed Paul, upon these terms, was willing to have his day of coronation in glory prorogued, and he to stay as companion with his brethren in tribulation, here, for the furtherance of the gospel. This indeed makes it *operæ pretium vivere*, worth the while to live, that we have by it a fair opportunity (if hearts to husband it) in which we may give a proof of our real gratitude to our God for his redeeming love, in rescuing us out of the power of the prince of darkness, and translating us into the kingdom of his dear Son. And therefore, Christian, lose no time, but what thou meanest to do for God, do it quickly.—Art thou a magistrate? Now it will be soon seen on whose side thou art: If indeed thou hast renounced allegiance to satan, and taken Christ for thy prince, declare thyself an enemy to all that bear the name of satan, and march under his colours. Study well thy commission, and when thou understandest the duty of thy place, fall to work zealously for God. Thou hast thy Prince's sword put into thy hand, be sure thou use it, and take heed how thou usest it; that when called to deliver it up, and thy account also, it may not be found rusty in the sheath through sloth and cowardice, besmeared with the blood of violence, nor bent and gapt with partiality and injustice. Art thou a minister of the gospel? Thy employment is high, an ambassador, and that not from some petty prince, but the great God to his rebellious subjects; a calling so honourable, that the *Son of God* disdained not

to

to come in extraordinary from heaven to perform it, called therefore the *messenger of the covenant;* yea, he had to this day staid on earth in person about it, had he not been called to reside as our ambassador and advocate in heaven with the Father: and therefore in his bodily absence he hath intrusted thee and a few more to carry on the treaty with sinners, which when on earth himself began. And what can you do more acceptable to him, than to be faithful in it, as a business on which he hath set his heart so much? If ever you would see his sweet face with joy, (you that are his ambassadors) attend to your work, and labour to bring this treaty of peace to a blessed issue between God and those you are sent to. And then if sinners will not come off, and seal the articles of the gospel, you shall (as Abraham said to his servant) be clear of your oath. Though Israel be not gathered, yet you shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. And let not the private Christian say, he is a dry tree, and can do nothing for Christ his prince, because he may not bear the magistrate's fruit or minister's. Though thou hast not a commission to punish the sins of others with the sword of justice, yet thou mayest shew thy zeal in mortifying thy own with the sword of the spirit, and mourn for theirs also: though thou mayest not condemn them on the bench, yet thou mayest, yea, oughtest, by the power of a holy life, to convince and judge them; such a judge was Lot to the Sodomites. Though thou art not sent to preach and baptize, yet thou mayest be wonderful helpful to them who are. The Christian's prayers whet the magistrate's and minister's sword also. O pray, Christian, and pray again, that Christ's territories may be enlarged; never go to hear the word, but pray, *Thy kingdom come.* Loving princes take great content in the acclamations and good wishes of their subjects as they pass by; a *Vivat Rex*, Long live the king, coming from a loyal breath, though poor, is more worth than a subsidy from those who deny their hearts while they part with their money. Thou servest a prince (Christian) who knows what all his subjects think of him, and he counts it his honour not to have a multitude feignedly submit to him, but to have a people that love him, and cordially like his government, who, if they were to choose their king, and make their own laws they should live under every day, would desire no other than himself, nor any other laws than what they have already from his mouth. It was no doubt great content to David, that he had the hearts of his people, so as *whatever the king did pleased them all*, 2 Sam. iii. 26. And surely God took it as well, that what he did pleased David; for indeed David was as content under the rule and disposure of God, as the people were under his; witness the calmness of his spirit in the greatest affliction that ever befel him, 2 Sam. xv. 26. *Behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth*

seemeth good unto him. Loyal soul! he had rather live in exile with the good-will of God, than have his throne, if God will not say 'tis good for him.

CHAP. IV.

Of the great Power Satan hath, not only over the elementary and sensitive Part of the World, but intellectual also—the Souls of Men.

SECT. I.—THIS is the second branch of the description, wherein satan is set forth by his might and power. This gives weight to the former; were he a prince, and not able to raise a force that might dread the saints, the swelling name of a prince were contemptible; but he hath power answerable to his dignity, which in five particulars will appear.

First, In his name; Secondly, his nature; Thirdly, his number; Fourthly, his order and unity; Lastly, the mighty works that are attributed to him.

First, For the first, He has names of great power, called the *strong man,* Luke xi. 21. so strong, that he keeps his house in peace, in defiance of all the sons of Adam, none on earth being able to cope with this giant: Christ must come from heaven to destroy him and his works, or the field is lost. He is called the *roaring lion,* which beast commands the whole forest; if he roars, all tremble; yea, in such a manner, as Pliny relates, that he goes amongst them, and they stand exanimated while he chooseth his prey without resistance: such a lion is satan, who leads sinners *captive at his will,* 2 Tim. iii. 26. *He takes them alive,* as the word is, as the fowler the bird, which with a little scrap is enticed into the net; or as the conqueror his cowardly enemy, who has no heart to fight, but yields without contest. Such cowards the devil finds sinners; he no sooner appears in motion, but they yield: there are but a few noble spirits, and those are the children of the most high God, who dare valiantly oppose him, and in striving against sin, resist to blood. He is called the *great red dragon,* who with his tail, wicked men, his instruments, sweeps down the third part of the stars of heaven: *the prince of the power of the air,* because a prince can muster his subjects, and draw them into the field for his service, so the devil can raise the *posse cœli aërii.* In a word, he is called *the god of this world,* 2 Cor. iv. 4. because sinners give him a godlike worship, fear him as the saints do God himself.

Secondly, The devil's nature shews his power; 'tis angelical.

Bless

Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, Psal. ciii. 20. Strength is put for angels, Psal. lxxviii. 25. *They did eat angels' food*, Heb. the food of the mighty. In two things the power of angelical nature will appear; in its superiority, and in its spirituality.

First, Its superiority: angels are the top of the creation; man himself made a little lower than the angels. Now in the works of creation, the superior hath a power over the inferior; the beasts over the grass and herb, man over the beasts, and angels over man.

Secondly, The spirituality of their nature. The weakness of man is from his flesh: his soul, made for great enterprizes, but weighed down with a lump of flesh, is forced to row with a strength suitable to its weaker partner; but now the devils being angels have no such incumbrance, no fumes from a fleshly part to cloud their understanding, which is clear and piercing; no clog at their heel to retard their motion, which for swiftness is set out by the wind and flame of fire. Yea, being spiritual, they cannot be resisted with carnal force, fire and sword hurt not them. The angel which appeared to Manoah, went up in the fire that consumed the sacrifice, though such hath been the dotage, and is at this day, of superstitious ones, that they think to charm the devil with their carnal exorcisms; hence the Romish reliques, cross, holy water; yea, and among the Jews themselves in corrupter times, who thought by their phylacteries, and circumcision, to scare away the devil, which made some of them expound that, Cant. iii. 8. of circumcision, *Every man hath his sword on his thigh, because of fear in the night:* By sword on the thigh, they expound circumcision, which they will vainly have given as a charm against evil spirits that affright them in the night. But alas! the devil cares for none of these, no, not for an ordinance of God, when by fleshly confidence we make it a spell: he hath been often bound with these fetters and chains (as is said of him in the gospel), and the chains have been plucked asunder by him, neither could any man thus tame him. He esteems, as Job saith of the leviathan, *iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood.* It must be a stronger than the strong man must bind him, and none stronger but God the father of spirits. The devil lost indeed by his fall much of his power, in relation to that holy and happy state in which he was created, but not his natural abilities; he is an angel still, and hath angel's power.

Thirdly, The number of devils adds to their power. What lighter than the sand? yet number makes it weighty. What creature less than lice? yet what plague greater to the Egyptians? How formidable then must devils be, who are both for nature so mighty, and for number such a multitude? There are devils enough to beleaugre the whole earth; not a place under heaven where

where satan hath not his troops, not a person without some of these cursed spirits haunting and watching him wherever he goes; yea, for some special service he can send a legion to keep garrison in one single person, as, Mark v. and if so many can be spared to attend one, to what a number would the muster-roll of satan's whole army amount, if known? And now tell me, if we are not like to find our march difficult to heaven (if ever we mean to go thither), that are to pass through the very quarters of this multitude, who are scattered over the face of all the earth? When armies are disbanded, and the roads full of debauched soldiers, wandering up and down, it's dangerous travelling: we hear then of murders and robberies from all quarters: These powers of hell are that party of angels, who for their mutiny and disobedience were cashiered heaven, and thrust out of that glorious host, and ever since they have straggled here below, endeavouring to do mischief to the children of men, especially those travelling in heaven's road.

Fourthly, Their unity and order makes their number formidable. We cannot say there is love among them; that heavenly fire cannot live in the devil's bosom; yet their way is unity and order as to this,—they are all agreed in their designs against God and man: so their unity and consent is knit together by the ligaments, not of love, but of hatred and policy; hatred against God and his children, which they are filled with; and policy, which tells them, that if they agree not in their design, their kingdom cannot stand. And how true they are to this wicked brotherhood, our Saviour gives a fair testimony, when he saith, *satan fights not against satan.* Did you ever hear of any mutiny in the devil's army? or that any of those apostate angels did freely yield up one soul to Christ? They are many, and yet but one spirit of wickedness among them all. *My name*, said the devils, (not our name) *is legion.* The devil is called the *Leviathan*, (Isa. xxvii. 1. *The Lord with his strong sword shall punish Leviathan,*) from their cleaving together, being of close compact, or joined together, a phrase used for the whale, Job iv. whose strength lies in his scales, which are so knit, that he is, as it were, covered with armour. Thus these cursed spirits do accord in their machinations, and labour to bring their instruments into the same league with them, not contented with their bare obedience, but where they can obtain it, do require an express oath of their servants, to be true to them, as in witches.

Fifthly, The mighty works that are attributed to those evil spirits in scripture declare their power; and these either respect the elementary, sensible, or intellectual part of the world. The elementary, what dreadful effects this prince of the power of the air is able to produce on that, see in the word; he cannot indeed make

make the least breath of air, drop of water, or spark of fire, but he can, if let loose, (as the Rev. Mr. Caryl saith, on Job i.) go to God's store-house, and make use of these in such a sort, as no man can stand before him; he can hurl the sea into such a commotion, that the depths shall boil like a pot, and disturb the air into storms and tempests, as if heaven and earth would meet. Job's children were buried in the ruins of their house by a puff of his mouth; yea, he can go to God's magazine, (as the former author saith), and let off the great ordnance of heaven, causing such dreadful thunder and lightning, as shall not only affright, but do real execution, and that in a more dreadful way than in the ordinary course of nature: if man's art can so sublimate nature, as we see in the invention of powder, that hath such a strange force, much more able is he to draw forth its power. Again, over the sensitive world his power is great; not only the beasts, as in the herd of swine, hurried by him into the deep; but over the bodies of men also, as in Job, whose sore boils were not the breakings out of a distempered nature, but the print of satan's fangs on his flesh, doing that suddenly, which in nature would have required more time to gather and ripen; and the demoniacs in the gospel grievously vexed and tormented by him. But this the devil counts small game; his great spite is at the souls of men, which I call the intellectual world; his cruelty to the body is for the soul's sake. As Christ's pity to the bodies of men (when on earth), healing their diseases, was in a subserviency to the good of their souls, bribing them with those mercies suitable to their carnal desires, that they might more willingly receive mercies for their souls, from that hand which was so kind to their bodies; as we give children something that pleaseth them, to persuade them to do something that pleaseth them not, as go to school, learn their book: so the devil who is cruel, as Christ is meek, and wisheth good neither to body nor soul, yet shews his cruelty to the body, but on a design against the soul, knowing well that the soul is soon discomposed by the perturbation of the other; the soul cannot but lightly hear (and so have its peace and rest broken by the groans and complaints of the body), under whose very roof it dwells; and then it is not strange, if as for want of sleep the tongue talk idly, so the soul should break out into some sinful carriage, which is the bottom of the devil's plot on a saint. And as for other poor silly souls, he gains little less than a godlike fear and dread of them, by that power he puts forth (through divine permission) in smiting their goods, beasts, and bodies, as among the Indians at this day. Yea, there are many among ourselves plainly shew what a throne satan hath in their hearts upon this account, such who, as if there were not a God in Israel, go for help and cure to his doctors, wizards I mean. And truly had

satan

satan no other way to work his will on the souls of men, but by this advantage he takes from the body, yet considering the degeneracy of man's estate, how low his soul is sunk beneath its primitive extraction, how the body, which was a lightsome house, is now become a prison to it, that which was its servant is now become its master; it is no wonder he is able to do so much. But besides this, he hath as a spirit a nearer way of access to the soul, and as a superior spirit, yet more, over man a lower creature. And above all, having got within the soul by man's fall, he hath now far more power than before; so that where he meets not resistance from God, he carries all before him: as in the wicked, whom he hath so at his devotion, that he is (in a sense) said to do that in them, which God doth in the saints. God works effectually in them, Gal. ii. 8. 1 Thes. ii. 13. Satan worketh effectually in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2. *energountos*, the same word with the former places; he is in a manner as efficacious with them, as the Holy Spirit with the other. His delusions strong, 2 Thes. ii. 11. They returned not *re infecta*. The spirit *enlightens*, he *blinds* the minds of those that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4. The spirit *fills* the saints, Eph. v. 8. *Why hath satan filled thy heart?* saith Peter to Ananias, Acts v. 3. *The spirit fills with knowledge, and the fruits of righteousness;* satan fills with envy and all unrighteousness. The Holy Spirit fills with comfort; satan the wicked with terrors: as in Saul vexed by an evil spirit; and Judas, into whom 'tis said he entered, and when he had satisfied his lust upon him, (as Amnon on Tamar), shuts the door of mercy upon him, and makes him, that was even now traitor to his master, hangman to himself. And though saints be not the proper subjects of his power, yet they are the chief objects of his wrath; his foot stands on the wicked's back, but he wrestles with these, and when God steps aside, he is far above their match: he hath sent the strongest among them home, trembling and crying to their God, with the blood running about their consciences. He is mighty, both as a tempter to and for sin, knowing the state of the Christian's affairs so well, and able to throw his fire-balls so far into the inward senses (whether they be of lust or horror), and to blow up these with such unwearied solicitations, that if they at first meet not with some suitable dispositions in the Christian, at which, as from loose corns of powder, they may take fire (which is most ordinary), yet in time he may bring over the creature by the length of the siege, and continued volleys of such motions, to listen to a parley with them, if not yielding to them. Thus many times he even wearies out the soul with importunity.

SECT. II.—*Use* 1. First, Let this (O man) make the plumes of thy pride fall, whoever thou art that gloriest in thy power; hadst

hadst thou more than thou or any of the sons of Adam ever had, yet what is all that to the power of these angels? Is it the strength of thy body thou gloriest in? Alas! what is the strength of frail flesh, to the force of their spiritual nature? Thou art no more to these than a child to a giant, a worm to a man; who could tear up the mountains, and hurl the world into confusion, if God would suffer them. Is it the strength of thy parts above others? Dost thou not see what fools he makes of the wisest amongst men? winding them about as a sophister would do an idiot, make them believe light is dark, bitter is sweet, and sweet bitter; were not the strength of his parts admirable, could he make a rational creature, as a man is, so absurdly throw away his scarlet, and embrace dung: I mean, part with God and the glorious happiness he hath in him, in hope to mend himself, by embracing sin? Yet this he did, when man had his best wits about him in innocency. Is it the power of place and dignity, got by warlike atchievements? Grant thou wert able to subdue nations, and give laws to the whole world, yet even then, without grace from above, thou wouldst be his slave. And he himself, for all this his power, is a cursed spirit, the most miserable of all God's creatures, and the more, because he hath so much power to do mischief; had the devil lost all his angelical abilities, when he fell, he had gained by his loss. Therefore tremble (O man) at any power thou hast, except thou usest it for God. Art thou strong in body? Who hath thy strength? God, or thy lusts? Some are strong to drink, strong to sin, *Thy hands shall therefore be stronger,* Isa. xxviii. 22. Hast thou power by thy place to do God and his church service, but no heart to lay it out for them, but rather against them? thou and the devil shall be tried at the same bar; it seems thou meanest to go to hell for something, thou wilt carry thy full lading thither. No greater plague can befall a man than power without grace. Such great ones in the world, while here, make a brave shew; like chief commanders and field officers at the head of their regiments, the common soldiers are poor creatures to them; but when the army is beaten, and all taken prisoners, then they fling off their scarf and feather, and would be glad to pass for the meanest in the army. Happy would devils be, princes and great ones in the world be, if then they could appear in the habit of some poor sneaks, to receive their sentence as such; but then their titles, and dignity, and riches, shall be read, not for their honour, but for their shame and damnation.

Use 2. Secondly, It shews the folly of those that think it such an easy matter to get to heaven. If the devil be so mighty, and heaven's way so full of them, then sure it will cost hot water before we display our banners upon the walls of the *new Jerusalem.* Yet it is plain, many think otherwise, by the provision they make for

for their march. If you should see a man walking forth without a cloak, or with a very thin one, you will say, surely he fears no foul weather; or one riding a long journey alone, and without arms, you will conclude he expects no thieves on the road. All (if you ask them) will tell you they are on their way to heaven, but how few care for the company of the saints, as if they needed not their fellowship in their journey? Most go naked, without so much as any thing like armour, have not enough to gain the name of professors at large; others, it may be, will shew some vain slight hopes on the mercy of God, without any scripture-bottom for the same, and with these content themselves, which will, like a rusty unsound pistol, fly in their own face, when they come to use it: and is it any wrong to say these make nothing of getting heaven? Surely these men (many of whom thrive so well in the world) never got their estates with so little care as they think to get heaven. Ask them why they follow their trade so close; they will tell you, estates are not got by sleeping, families are not provided for with the hands in the pocket, they meet with many rooks and cheaters in their dealing, who, should they not look to themselves, would soon undo them: and are there none that thou needest fear will put a cheat on thy soul, and bereave thee of thy crown of glory if they can? Thou art blinder than the prophet's servant, if thou seest not more devils encompasing thee than he saw men about Samaria. Thy worldly trade they will not hinder, nay, may be, help thee to sinful tricks in that, to hinder thee in this: but if once thou resolvest to seek out for Christ and his grace, they will oppose thee to thy face; they are under an oath, as Paul's enemies were, to take away the life of thy soul if they can; desperate creatures themselves, who know their doom is irrecoverable, and sell their own lives they will as dear as they can. Now what folly is it to betray thy soul into their hands, when Christ stands by to be thy convoy! Out of him thou art a lost creature, thou canst not defend thyself alone against satan, nor with satan against God. Close with Christ, and thou art delivered from one of thy enemies, and him the most formidable, God I mean; yea, he is become thy friend, who will stick close to thee in thy conflict with the other.

Use 3. Thirdly, to the saints: Be not dismayed at this report which the scripture makes of satan's power; let them fear him who fear not God. What are these mountains of power and pride before thee, O Christian, who servest a God that can make a worm thresh a mountain! the greatest hurt he can do thee, is by nourishing this false fear of him in thy bosom. It is observed (Bernard saith) of some beasts in the forest, *Plerumque superant leonem ferientem, quæ non sustinet rugientem;* though they are too hard for the lion in fight, yet tremble when he roars. Thus

the Christian, when he comes to the pinch indeed, is able, through Christ, to trample satan under his feet; yet before the conflict, stands trembling at the thought of him. Labour therefore to get a right understanding of satan's power, and then this lion will not appear so fierce as you paint him in your melancholy fancy.—Three considerations will relieve you, when at any time you are beset with the fears of his power.

First, It is a derived power: he hath it not in himself, but by patent from another, and that no other but God: *All powers are of him,* whether in earth or in hell. This truth, subscribed in faith, would first secure thee (Christian) that satan's power shall never hurt thee. Would thy father give him a sword to mischieve thee his child? *I have created the smith* (saith God) *that bloweth the coals, I have created the waster to destroy,* and therefore assures them, *that no weapon formed against them shall prosper,* Isa. liv. 16. &c. If God provide his enemies arms, they shall (I warrant you) be such as will do them little service. When Pilate thought to scare Christ with what he could do towards the saving or taking away of his life, he replies, *that he could do nothing except it were given from above,* John xix. 10. as if he had said, Do your worst, I know who sealed your commission.

Secondly, This considered, would meeken and quiet the soul, when troubled by satan within, or his instruments without. 'Tis satan buffets, man persecutes me, but God who gives them both power; *the Lord* (saith David) *bids him curse; the Lord* (saith Job) *hath given, and the Lord hath taken.* This kept the King's peace in both their bosoms. O Christian, look not on the jailor that whips thee, may be he is cruel, but read the warrant, who wrote that, and at the bottom thou shalt find thy Father's hand.

Secondly, satan's power is limited, and that two ways; he cannot do what he will, and he shall not do what he can.

First, He cannot do what he will: His desires are boundless, they walk not only to and fro' here below, but in heaven itself, where he is pulling down his once fellow angels, knocking down the carved work of that glorious temple, as with axes and hammers; yea, unthroning God, and setting himself in his place: This fool saith in his heart, there is no God; but he cannot do this, nor many other things which his cankered malice stirs him up to wish; he is but a creature, and so hath the length of his tether, to which he is staked, and cannot exceed; and if God be safe, then thou also, for thy life is hid with Christ in God; *If I live* (saith Christ), *you shall live also.* You are engraven on the table of his heart; if he plucks one away, he must the other also. *Again,* as he cannot hurt the *being* of God, so he cannot

pry

pry into the *bosom* of God. He knows not *man's*, much less the thoughts of God. The astrologers nor their master could bring back Nebuchadnezzar's dream. As men have their closets for their own privacy, where none can enter in but with their key, so God keeps the heart as his with-drawing room, shut to all besides himself; and therefore when he takes upon him to foretel events, if God teach him not his lesson, nor second causes help him, he is beside his book; so, to save his credit, delivers them dubiously, that his text may bear a gloss suitable to the effect whatever it is. And when he is bold to tell the state of a person, there is no weight to be laid on his judgment; Job was an hypocrite in his mouth, but God proved him a liar. Again, thirdly, he cannot hinder those purposes and counsels of God he knows. He knew Christ was to come in the flesh, and did his worst, but could not hinder his landing; though there were many devices in his heart, yet the counsel of the Lord concerning him did stand, yea, was delivered by the midwifery of satan's suggesting, and his instruments executing his lust, as they thought, but fulfilling God's counsel against themselves. Fourthly, he cannot ravish thy will, *Diabolus non est jussor vitiorum, sed incentor*. He cannot command thee to sin against thy will; he can *motum agere*, make the soul go faster that is on its way, as the wind carries the tide with more swiftness, but he cannot turn the stream of the heart contrary to its own course and tendency.

Secondly, satan's power is so limited, that he shall not do what he can: God lets out so much of his wrath as shall praise him, and be as a stream to set his purpose of love to his saints on work, and then lets down the flood-gate, by restraining the residue thereof; God ever takes him off before he can finish his work on a saint. He can (if God suffers him) rob the Christian of much of his joy, and disturb his peace by his cunning insinuations, but he is under command; he stands like a dog by the table, while the saints sit at this sweet feast of comfort, but dares not stir to roam off their cheer, his Master's eye is on him. The want of this consideration loseth God his praise, and us our comfort, God having locked up our comfort in the performance of our duty.—Did the Christian consider what satan's power is, and who dams it up, this would always be a song of praise in his mouth. Hath satan power to rob and burn, kill and slay, torment the body, distress the mind? Whom may I think that I am in any of these out of his hands? Doth satan love one better than Job? or am I out of sight, or beside his walk? Is his courage cooled, or his wrath appeased, that I escape so well? No, none of these, his wrath is not against one, but all the saints; his eye is on thee, and his arm can reach thee; his spirit is not cowed, nor his stomach staid with those millions he hath devoured, but keen as ever,

yea, sharper, because now he sees God ready to take away, and the end of the world drawing on so fast. 'Tis thy God alone whom thou art beholden to for all this; his eye keepeth thee; when satan finds the *good man* asleep, then he finds *our good God* awake; therefore thou art not consumed, because he changeth not. Did his eye slumber or wander one moment, there would need no other flood to drown thee, yea, the whole world, than what would come out of this dragon's mouth.

Thirdly, satan's power is ministerial, appointed by God for the service and benefit of the saints: 'tis true (as its said of the proud Assyrian) *he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so,* Isa. x. 7. but it is in his heart to destroy those he tempts: but no matter what he thinks. As Luther comforted himself, when told what had passed at the diet at Nuremberg against the Protestants, that *it was decreed one way there, but otherwise in heaven;* so for the saint's comfort, the thoughts which God thinks to make them are peace, while satan's are ruin to their graces, and destruction to their souls; and his counsel shall stand in spite of the devil. The very mittimus which God makes, when he commits any of his saints to the devil's prison, runs thus,—*Deliver such a one to satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus,* 1 Cor. v. 5. So that tempted saints may say, we had perished if we had not perished to our own thinking. This leviathan, while he thinks to swallow them up, is but sent of God (as the whale to Jonah) to waft them safe to land. *Some of them of understanding shall fall to try them, and to purge them, and to make them white,* Dan. xi. 35. This God intends when he lets his children fall into temptation, as we do with our linen; the spots they get at our feasts, are taken out by washing, rubbing, and laying them out to bleach. The saint's spots are most in peace, plenty, and prosperity, and they never recover their whiteness to such a degree, as when they come from under satan's scowering. We do too little, not to fear satan; we should comfort ourselves with the usefulness and subserviency of his temptations to our good. *All things are yours,* who are Christ's. He that hath given life to be yours, hath given death also. He that hath given heaven for your inheritance, Paul and Cephas, his ministers and ordinances to help you thither, hath given the world, with all the afflictions of it, yea, the prince of it too, with all his wrath and power, in order to the same end. This indeed is love and wisdom in a riddle, but you who have the spirit of Christ can unfold it.

CHAP. V.

Of the Time when, the Place where, and the Subjects whom Satan rules. Against the Rulers of the Darkness of this World.

THESE words contain the third branch in the description of our great enemy the devil; and they hold forth the proper seat of his empire, with a three-fold boundary; he is not *lord over all*; that is the incommunicable title of God; but a *ruler of the darkness of this world*, where the time, place, and subjects of his empire are stinted.

1. The time when this prince hath his rule, *In this world;* that is, now, not hereafter.

2. The place where he rules, *In this world*, that is, here below, not in heaven.

3. The subjects or persons whom he rules, not all in this lower world neither; and they are wrapt up in these words, *The darkness of this world.* First, of the first boundary.

SECT. I.—1. The time when he rules; so this word [*world*] may be taken in the text for that little spot of time, which (like an inconsiderable parenthesis) is clasped in on either side with vast eternity, called sometimes the *present world*, Tit. ii. 12. On this stage of time, this mock-king acts the part of a prince; but when Christ comes to take down this scaffold at the end of this world, then he shall be degraded, his crown taken off, his sword broken over his head, and he hissed off with scorn and shame; yea, of a prince, become a close prisoner in hell: no more then shall he infect the saints, no, nor rule the wicked; but he with them, and they with him, shall lie under the immediate execution of God's wrath. For this very end Christ hath his patent and commission, which he will not give up *till he shall have put down all rule*, 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25. Then, and not till then, will he deliver up his œconomical kingdom to his Father, when he shall have put down all rule; *for he must reign till he have put all enemies under his feet.* Satan is cast already, his doom is past upon him, as Adam's was, upon his first sin, but full execution is stayed till the end of the world. The devil knows it, it is an article in his creed, which made him trembling ask Christ why he came *to torment him before his time.*

Use 1. First, this brings ill news to the wicked. Your Prince cannot long sit in his throne; sinners at present have a merry time of it, if it would hold; they rejoice while Christ's disciples weep and mourn; they rustle in their silks, while the saint goes in his rags. Princes are not more careful to oblige their cour-

tiers with pensions and preferments, than the devil is to gratify his followers. He hath his rewards also; *All this I will give thee. Am not I able to promote thee?* saith Balak to Balaam. O 'tis strange (and yet not strange, considering the degeneracy of man's nature), to see how Satan carries sinners after him with this golden hook. Let him but present such a bait as honour, pelf, or pleasure, and their hearts skip after it as a dog would at a crust; he makes them sin for a morsel of bread: O the naughty heart of man loves the wages of unrighteousness (which the devil promiseth) so dearly, that it fears not the dreadful wages which the great God threatens. As sometimes you shall see a spaniel so greedy of a bone, that he will leap into the very river for it, if you throw it thither, and by the time he comes with much ado thither, it is sunk, and he gets nothing but a mouthful of water for his pains: thus sinners will catch at their desired pleasures, honours, and profits, swimming through the very threatenings of the word to them, and oftentimes they lose even what they gaped for here. Thus, *God kept Balaam* (as Balak told him) *from honour*, Numb. xxiv. 11. But however they speed here, they are sure to lose themselves everlastingly without repentance. They that are resolved they will have these things, are the men that fall into the devil's snare, and are led into those foolish and hurtful lusts which will drown them in destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9. O poor sinners! were it not wisdom, before you truck with the devil, to enquire what title he can give you to those goodly vanities? Will he settle them as a free estate upon you? Can he secure your bargain, and keep you from suits of law? Or is he able to put two lives into the purchase, that when you die you may not be left destitute in another world? Alas, poor wretches! you shall 'ere long see what a cheat he hath put on you, from whom you are like to have nought but *caveat emptor*: Let the buyer look to that. Yea, this great Prince that is so brag to tell what he will give you, must down himself; and a sad prince must needs make a sad court. O what howling will there then be of Satan and his vassals together? O, but saith the sinner, the pleasures and honours sin and satan offer are present, and that which Christ promiseth we must stay for. This indeed is that which takes most. *Demas*, saith Paul, *forsook me, having loved this present world*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. 'Tis present indeed (sinners), for you cannot say it will be yours the next moment; your present felicity is going, and the saint's (though future) is coming never to go: and who, for a gulp of pottage, and sensual enjoyments at present, would part with a reversion of such a kingdom? except thou art of his mind, who thought he had nothing but what he had swallowed down his throat.

Hæc habeo quæ edi, quæque exaturata libido
Haufit.——————

Which

Which Cicero would say, was more fit to be wrote on an ox's grave than a man's. Vile wretch, that thinkest 'tis not better to deal with God for time, than the devil for ready pay. Tertullian wonders at the folly of the Roman ambition, who would endure all manner of hardship in field and fight, for no other thing but to obtain at last the honour to be consul, which he calls *unius anni volaticum gaudium*, a joy that flies away at the year's end. But O what a desperate madness is it for sinners then, not to endure a little hardship here, but entail on themselves the eternal wrath of God hereafter, for the short feast and running banquet their lusts entertain them here withal, which often is not *gaudium unius horæ*, a joy that lasts an hour.

Use 2. Secondly, Let this encourage thee, O Christian, in thy conflict with satan; the skirmish may be sharp, but it cannot be long. Let him tempt thee, and his wicked instruments trounce thee; 'tis but a little while, and thou shalt be rid of both their evil neighbourhoods. The cloud, while it drops, is rolling over thy head, and then comes fair weather, and eternal sun-shine of glory. Canst thou not watch with Christ one hour or two? keep the field a few days? If yield, thou art undone for ever; persevere but until the battle is over, and thine enemy shall never rally more; bid faith look through the key-hole of the promise, and tell thee what it sees there laid up for him that overcomes; bid it listen and tell thee, whether it cannot hear the shouts of those crowned saints, as of those that are dividing the spoil, and receiving the reward of all their services and sufferings here on earth: and doest thou stand on the other side afraid to wet thy foot with those sufferings and temptations, which, like a plash of water, run between thee and glory.

SECT. II.—Secondly, The devil's empire is confined to place as well as time: he is the ruler of this lower world, not of the heavenly. The highest the devil can go is the air, called the prince thereof, as being the utmost marches of his empire; he hath nothing to do with the upper world. Heaven fears no devil, and therefore its gates stand always open; never durst this fiend look into that holy place since he was first expelled, but rangeth to and fro' here below as a vagabond creature, excommunicated the presence of God, doing what mischief he can to saints in their way to heaven: But is not this great matter of great joy, that satan hath no power there where the saint's happiness lies? What hast thou (Christian) which thou needest value that is not there? Thy Christ is there, and if thou lovest him, thy heart also, which lives in the bosom of its beloved. Thy friends and kindred in Christ are there, or expected, with whom thou shalt have a merry meeting in thy father's house, notwithstanding the snare on Tabor, the plots of satan which lie in the way. O friends, get a

title to that kingdom, and you are above the flight of this kite.—This made Job a happy man indeed, who, when the devil had plundered him to his skin, and worried him almost out of that too, could then vouch Christ in the face of death and devils to be his Redeemer, whom he should, with those eyes that now stood full with brinish tears, behold, and that for himself as his own portion. It is sad with him indeed, who is robbed of all he is worth at once; but this can never be said of a saint. The devil took away Job's purse (as I may say) which put him into some straits, but he had a God in heaven that put him into stock again. Some spending money thou hast at present in thy purse, in the activity of thy faith, the evidence of thy son-ship, and the comfort flowing from the same, enlargement in duty, and the like, which satan may for a time disturb, yea, deprive thee of, but he cannot come to the rolls to blot thy name out of the book of life: he cannot null thy faith, make void thy relation, dry up thy comfort in the spring, though dam up the stream; nor hinder thee a happy issue of thy whole war with sin, though worst thee in a private skirmish; these all are kept in heaven, among God's own crown-jewels, who is said to keep us by his power *through faith unto salvation.*

SECT. III.—The third boundary of the devil's principality is in regard of his subjects, and they are described here to be *the darkness of this world*, that is, such who are in darkness. This word is used sometimes to express the desolate condition of a creature in some great distress, Isa. l. *He that walks in darkness, and sees no light:* sometimes to express the nature of all sin, so Ephes. v. 1. sin is called the work of darkness; sometimes the particular sin of ignorance; often set out by the darkness of the night, blindness of the eye; all these I conceive may be meant, but chiefly the latter: for though satan makes a foul stir in the soul; that is, in the dark of sorrow, whether it be from outward crosses, or inward desertions; yet if the creature be not in the darkness of sin at the same time, though he may disturb his peace as an enemy, yet cannot be said to rule as a prince. Sin only sets satan in the throne; so that I shall take the words in the two latter interpretations.

First, for the darkness of sin in general.

Secondly, for the darkness of ignorance in special; and the sense will be, That the devil's rule is over those that are in a state of sin and ignorance, not over those who are sinful or ignorant; so he would take hold of saints as well as others; but over those who are in a state of sin, which is set out by the abstract, *Ruler of the darkness*, the more to express the fulness of the sin and ignorance that possesseth satan's slaves; and the notes will be two.

First,

First, Every soul in a state of sin is under the rule of satan.

Secondly, Ignorance, above other things, enslaves a soul to satan; and therefore all sins are set out by that which chiefly expresseth this, *viz.* darkness.

Doct. Every soul in a state of sin is under the rule of satan; under which point these two things must be inquired.

First, The reason why sin is set out by darkness.

Secondly, How every one in such a state appears to be under the devil's rule. For the first:

First, sin may be called darkness, because the spring and common cause of sin in man is darkness. The external cause, satan, who is the great promoter of it, he is a cursed spirit held in chains of darkness. The internal is the blindness and darkness of the soul: we may say, when any one sins, he doth he knows not what, as Christ said of his murderers. Did the creature know the true worth of the soul (which he now sells for a song), the glorious amiable nature of God and his holy ways, the matchless love of God in Christ, the poisonous nature of sin, and all these not by a sudden beam darted into the window at a sermon, and gone again, like a flash of lightning, but by an abiding light; this would spoil the devil's market, and poor creatures would not readily take this toad into their bosoms; sin goes in a disguise, and so is welcome.

Secondly, it is darkness, because it brings darkness into the soul, and that naturally and judicially.

First, Naturally. There is a noxious quality in sin offensive to the understanding, which is to the soul what the eye and palate are to the body; it discerns of things, and distinguisheth true from false, as the eye white from black: It trieth words as the mouth tasteth meats. Now, as there are some things bad for the sight, and others bad for the palate, vitiating it, so that it shall not know sweet from bitter; so here sin besots the creature, and makes it unjudicious, that he who could see such a practice absurd and base in others before, when once he had drank of this inchanting cup himself (as one that hath foredone his understanding), is mad of it himself, not able now to see the evil of it, or use his reason against it. Thus Saul, before he had debauched his conscience, thinks the witch worthy of death; but after he had trodden his conscience hard with other foul sins, goes to ask counsel of one himself.

Again, sin brings darkness judicially; such have been threatened, whose ear God hath been trying to open and instruct, and have run out of God's school into the devil's, by *rebelling against light*, that they shall *die without knowledge*, Job xxxvi. 10. 12. What, should the candle burn waste, when the creature hath more mind to play than work?

Thirdly, Sin runs into darkness. Impostors bring in their *damnable*

damnable heresies privily, like those who sell bad ware, loth to come to the market, where the standard tries all; but put it off in secret: So in mortal wickedness; sinners, like beasts, go out in the night for their prey, loth to be seen, afraid to come where they should be found out. Nothing more terrible to sinners than the light of truth, John iii. 19. *Because their deeds are evil.*— Felix was so nettled with what Paul spake, that he could not sit out the sermon, but flings away in haste, and adjourns the hearing of Paul till a convenient season, but he never could find one. The sun is not more troublesome in hot countries, than truth is to those who sit under the powerful preaching of it; and therefore as those seldom come abroad in the heat of the day, and when they must have their devices over their heads, to skreen them from the sun; so sinners shun as much as may be the preaching of the word; but if they must go, to keep in with their relations, or for other carnal advantages, they, if possible, will keep off the power of truth, either by sleeping the sermon away, or prating it away with any foolish imagination which satan sends to bear them company and chat with them at such a time; or by choosing such a cool preacher to sit under, whose toothless discourse shall rather flatter than trouble, rather tickle their fancy than prick their consciences; and then their sore eyes can look upon the light. *Florescentem amant veritatem qui non redarguentur;* they dare handle and look on the sword with a delight, when in a rich scabbard, who would run away to see it drawn.

Fourthly, Sin is darkness for its uncomfortableness, and that in a threefold respect.

First, Darkness is uncomfortable, as it shuts out of all employment. What could the Egyptians do under the plague of darkness, but sit still? and this to an active spirit is trouble enough. Thus in a state of sin man is an unserviceable creature, he can do his God no service acceptably, spoils every thing he takes in hand; like one running up and down in a shop with windows shut, doth nothing right. It may be writ on the grave of every sinner, who lives and dies in that state, "Here lies the man "that never did God an hour's work in all his life."

Secondly, Darkness is uncomfortable in point of enjoyment: be there ever such rare pictures in the room, if dark, who the better? A soul in a state of sin may possess much, but enjoys nothing: This is a sore evil, and little thought of. One thought of its state of enmity to God would drop bitterness into every cup: all he hath, smells of hell-fire; and a man at a rich feast would enjoy it sure but little, if he smelt fire ready to burn his house and himself.

Thirdly, Darkness fills with terrors; fears in the night are most dreadful; a state of sin is a state of fear. Men that owe much

much, have no quiet, but when they are asleep; and not then neither; the cares and fears of the day sink so deep, as makes their rest troublesome and unquiet in the night. The wicked hath no peace, but when his conscience sleeps, and that sleeps but brokenly, awaking often with sick fits of terror: When he hath most prosperity, he is scared like a flock of birds in a corn-field at every piece going off. He eats in fear, and drinks in fear; when afflicted, he expects worse behind, and knows not what this blood may spread to, and where it may lay him; whether in hell or not, he knows not; and therefore trembles (as one in the dark), not knowing but his next step may be into the pit.

Fifthly, Sin leads to utter darkness; utter darkness is darkness to the utmost. Sin in its full height, and wrath in its full heat together; both universal, both eternal. Here's some mixture, peace and trouble, pain and ease, sin and thoughts of repenting, sin and hopes of pardon; there the fire of wrath shall burn without slacking, and sin run parallel with torment: Hell-birds are no changelings; their torment makes them sin, and their sin feeds their torment—both unquenchable, one being fuel to another.

2. Let us see how it appears, that such as are under a state of sin, are under the rule of Satan. Sinners are called the children of the devil, 1 John iii. 10. and who rules the child but the father? They are slaves; who rules the slave but the master? They are the very mansion-house of the devil; where hath a man command, but in his own house? *I will go to my house*, Matt. xii. 44. As if the devil had said, I have walked among the saints of God, to and fro', knocking at this door and at that, and none will bid me welcome, I can find no rest; well, I know where I may be bold; I'll even go to my own house, and there I am sure to rule the roast without controul: and *when he comes, he finds it empty, swept and garnished*; that is, all ready for his entertainment.—Servants make the house trim and handsome against their master comes home, especially when he brings guests with him, as here the devil brings *seven more*.

Look to the sinner, there is nothing he is or hath, but the devil hath dominion over it: *he rules the whole man*, their minds blinding them. All the sinner's apprehension of things are shapen by satan: he looks on sin with the devil's spectacles; he reads the word with the devil's comment: he sees nothing in its native colours, but is under a continual delusion. The very wisdom of a wicked man is said to be *devilish*, Jam. iii. 15. *Daimoniodes*, or *devil-like*, because taught by the devil, and also such as the devil's is, *wise only to do evil*. *He commands their wills*, though not to force them, yet effectually to draw them. *His work* (saith Christ) *ye will do*. You are resolved on your way, the devil hath got your hearts, and him you will obey: and therefore when Christ

Christ comes to recover his throne, he finds the soul in an uproar, as Ephesus at Paul's sermon, crying him down, and Diana up. We will not have this man to reign over us; what is the Almighty, that we should serve him? *He rules over all their members;* they are called *weapons of unrighteousness;* all at the devil's service; as all the arms of a kingdom, to defend the prince against any that shall invade. The head to plot, the hand to act, the feet swift to carry the body up and down about his service. *He rules over all he hath.* Let God come in a poor member, and beseech him to lend him a penny, or bestow a morsel to refresh his craving bowels; and the covetous wretch's hand of charity is withered, that he cannot stretch it forth: but let satan call, and his purse flies open, and heart also. Nabal that could not spare a few fragments for David and his followers, this churl could make *a feast like a prince*, to satisfy his own lust of gluttony and drunkenness. *He commands their time;* when God calls to duty, to pray, to hear, no time all the week to be spared for that; but if the sinner hears there is a merry meeting, a knot of good fellows at the ale-house, all is thrown aside to wait on his lord and master; calling left at sixes and sevens, yea, wife and children crying (may be starving) while the wretch is pouring out their very blood (in wasting their livelihood) at the foot of his lust. The sinner is in the *bond of iniquity;* and being bound, he must obey. He is said to go after his lusts, *as the fool to the stocks*, Prov. vii. 22. The pinioned malefactor can as soon untie his own arms and legs, and so run from his keeper, as he from his lusts. *They are servants*, and their members instruments of sin: even as the workman takes up his ax, and it resists not; so doth satan dispose of them, except God saith nay.

See here the deplored condition of every one in a state of sin.—He is under the rule of satan, and government of hell. What tongue can utter, what heart can conceive the misery of this state? It was a dismal day which Christ foretold, Matth. xxiv. *When the abomination of desolation should be seen, standing in the Holy Place: then* (saith Christ) *let him that is in Judea flee into the mountains.* But what was that to this? they are but men, though abominable; these devils. They did but stand in the material temple, and defile and deface that; but these display their banners in the souls of men, pollute that throne, which is more glorious than the material heaven itself, made for God alone to sit in. They exercised their cruelties at farthest on the bodies of men, killing and torturing them: here the precious souls of men are destroyed. When David would curse to purpose the enemies of God, he prays that satan *may be at their right hand.* 'Tis strange sinners should no more tremble at this, who, should they but see their swine, or a beast, bewitched and possessed of the devil,

devil, run headlong into the sea, would cry out as half undone; and is not one soul more worth than all these? What a plague is it to have satan possess thy heart and spirit, hurrying thee in the fury of thy lusts to perdition! O poor man! what a sad change hast thou made? Thou who wouldst not sit under the meek and peaceable government of God thy rightful Lord, art paid for thy rebellion against him, in the cruelty of this tyrant, who writes all his laws in the blood of his subjects: and why will ye sit any longer (O sinners) under the shadow of this bramble, from whom you can expect nothing but eternal fire, to come at last and devour you? Behold Christ is in the field, sent of God to recover his right, and your liberty. His royal standard is pitched in the gospel, and proclamation made, that if any poor sinners, weary of the devil's government, and heavy laden with the miserable chains of his spiritual bondage, (so as these irons of his sins enter into his very soul to afflict it with the sense of them) shall thus come, and repair to Christ: he shall have protection from God's justice, the devil's wrath, and sin's dominion; in a word, *he shall have rest*, and that *glorious*, Mat. xi. 28. Isa. xi. 10. Usually when a people have been ground with the oppression of some bloody tyrant, they are apt enough to long for a change, and to listen to any overture that gives them hope of liberty, though reached by the hand of a stranger, who may prove as bad as the other; yet bondage is so grievous, that people desire to change (as sick men their beds), though they find little ease thereby. Why then should deliverance be unwelcome to you, sinners? Deliverance, brought not by a stranger whom you need fear what his design is upon you, but your near kinsman in blood, who cannot mean you ill, but he must first hate his own flesh; and who ever did that? To be sure not he; who, though he took part of our flesh, that he might have the right of our Redeemer, yet would have no kindred with us in the sinfulness of our nature, Heb. ii. 14, 15. And 'tis sin that makes us cruel, yea, to our own flesh. What can you expect from him but pure mercy, who is himself pure? They are *the mercies of the wicked which are cruel*, Heb. iv. 15. Believe it, (Sirs) Christ counts it his honour, that he is a king of a willing people, and not of slaves. He comes to make you free, not to bring you into bondage; to make you kings, not vassals. None gave Christ an evil word, but those who never were his subjects. Enquire but of those who have tried both satan's service and Christ's; they are best able to resolve you what they are. You see when a soul comes over from satan's quarters unto Christ's, and has but once the experience of that sweetness which is in his service, there's no getting him back to his old drudgery; as they say of those who come out of the north (which is cold and poor), they like the warm south so well, they seldom go back more.

more. What more dreadful to a gracious soul than to be delivered into the hands of satan? or fall under the power of his lusts? It would choose rather to leap into a burning furnace, than be commanded by them. This is the great request a child of God makes, that he would rather whip him in his house, than turn him out of it to become a prey to satan. O sinners, did you know (which you cannot till you come over to Christ, and embrace him as your Lord and Saviour) what the privileges of Christ's servants are, and what gentle usage saints have at Christ's hands, you would say those were the only happy men in the world, which stand continually before him. His laws are writ, not with his subjects' blood (as satan's are), but with his own. All his commands are acts of grace; 'tis a favour to be employed about them. To you 'tis given to believe, yea, to *suffer*, Phil. i. 29. Such an honour the saints esteem it to do any thing he commands, that they count God rewards them for one piece of service, if he enables them for another. *This I had* (said David) *because I kept thy precepts*, Psal. cxix. 56. What was the great reward he got? see ver. 55. *I have remembered thy name, O Lord, in the night, and kept thy law:* then follows, *This I had*: He got more strength and skill to keep the law for the future, by his obedience past; and was he not well paid (think you) for his pains? *There's fruit* even in *holiness*, the Christian hath in hand, which he eats while he is at work, that they may stay his stomach until the full reward comes, which is *eternal life*, Rom. vi. 22. Jesus Christ is a prince that loves to see his people thrive, and grow rich under his government. This is he whom sinners are so afraid of, that when he sets open their prison, and bids them come forth, they choose rather to bore their ears to the devil's post, than enjoy this blessed liberty. It is no wonder that some of the saints have (indeed *when tortured*) *not accepted deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection*, Heb. xi. 3. But what a riddle is this, that forlorn souls, bound with the chains of their lusts, and the irresistible decree of God for their damnation, if they believe not the Lord Jesus, should, as they are driving to execution, refuse deliverance; this may set heaven and earth to wondering. Surely, dying in their sins, they cannot hope to have a better resurrection than they have a death. I am afraid they do not firmly believe that they shall have any resurrection; and then no wonder they make so light of Christ's offer, who think themselves safe, when once earthed in this burrow of the grave. But let sinners know, 'tis not the grave can hold them, when the day of assizes comes, and the judge calls the prisoners to the bar. The grave was never intended to be a sanctuary to defend sinners from the hand of justice, but a close prison to secure them against the day of trial, that they may be forth-coming. Then sinners shall

shall be digged out of their burrows, and dragged out of their holes, to answer their contempt of Christ and his grace. O how will you be astonished to see him become your judge, whom you now refuse to be your king! to hear that gospel witness against you for your damnation, which at the same time shall acquit others for their salvation! What think you to do, sinner, in that day? wilt thou cry and scream for mercy at Christ's hand? Alas, when the sentence is past, thy face will immediately be covered: condemned prisoners are not allowed to speak; tears then are unprofitable, when no place is left for repentance, either in Christ's heart or thine own. Or meanest thou to apply thyself to thy old Lord, in whose service thou hast undone thy soul, and cry to him, as she to Ahab, Help, O king? Alas, thine eye shall see him in the same condemnation with thyself. Hadst thou not better now renounce the devil's rule, whilst thou may be received into Christ's government? pour out thy tears and cries now for mercy and grace when they are to be had, than to save them for another world to no purpose!

Quest. But possibly thou wilt say, *How may I, that am a home-born slave to sin, yea, who have lived so many years under his cursed rule, get out of his dominion and power, and be translated into the kingdom of Christ?*

Ans. The difficulty of this great work lies not in prevailing with Christ to receive thee for his subject, who refuseth none that in truth of heart desire to come under his shadow. It doth not stand with his design to reject any such. Do physicians use to chide their patients away? Lawyers their clients? or generals discourage those who fall off from the enemy, and come to their side? Surely no. When David was in the field, 'tis said, 2 Sam. xxii. 2. *Every man that was in distress, in debt, in discontent, gathered themselves to him, and he became a captain over them.* And so will Christ be to every one that is truly discontented with satan's government, and, upon an inward dislike thereof, repairs to him. But the main business will be to take thee off from thy engagements to thy lusts and satan, till which be done, Christ will not own thee as his subject, but look on thee as a spy. It fares with thee as with servants. There may be fallings out between them and their masters, and high words pass between them, that you would think they would take up their pack and be gone in all haste; but the fray is soon over, and by next morning all is forgot, and the servants are as hard at their work as ever. O how oft are sinners taking their leave of their lusts, and giving warning to their old masters, they will repent and reform, and what not? but in a few days they have repented of their repentance, and deformed their reformings, which shews they were drunk with some passion, when they thought or spake this; and

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no wonder they reserve all when they come to their true temper. Now because satan has many policies, by which, he useth to keep his hold of sinners; I shall discover some of them, which, if thou canst withstand, it will be no hard matter to bring thee out of his power and rule.

First, Satan doth his utmost, that sinners may not have any serious thoughts of the miserable state they are in, while under his rule; or hear any thing from others, which might the least unsettle their minds from his service. Consideration (he knows) is the first step to repentance: he that doth not consider his ways what they are, and whither they lead him, is not like to change them in haste. Israel stirred not, until Moses came, and had some discourse with them about their woeful slavery, and the gracious thoughts of God towards them; and then they began to desire to be gone. Pharaoh soon bethought him what consequence might follow upon this, and cunningly labours to prevent it by doubling their task: *ye are idle, ye are idle, therefore ye say, Let us go, and do sacrifice to the Lord. Go therefore and work*, Exod. v. 17. 18. As if he had said, Have you as much spare time to think of gadding into the wilderness, and have you your seditious conventicles (Moses and you) to lay your plots together? I'll break the knot; give them more work, scatter them all over the land to gather straw, that they may not meet to entice one another's heart from my service. Thus satan is very jealous of the sinner, afraid of every Christian that speaks to him, or ordinance he hears to inveigle him. By his good will he should come at neither; no, nor have a thought of heaven or hell from one end of the week to the other; and that he may have as few as may be, he keeps him full-handed with work. The sinner grinds, and he is filling the hopper that the mill may not stand still. He is with the sinner as soon as he wakes, and fills his wretched heart with some wicked thoughts, which, as a morning draught, may keep him from the infection of any savour of good, that may be breathed on him by others in the day-time. All the day long he watcheth him, as the master would do his man that he fears will run away. And at night, he, like a careful jailor, locks him up again in his chamber with more bolts and fetters upon him, not suffering him to sleep as he lies on his bed, *till he hath done some mischief*, Luke xv. Ah, poor wretch! was ever a slave so looked to? As long as the devil can keep thee thus, thou art his own sure enough. The prodigal *came to himself*, before he came to his father. He considered with himself what a starving condition he was in; his husks were poor meat, and yet he had not enough of them neither; and how easily he might mend his commons, if he had but grace to go home, and humble himself to his father. Now, and not till now, he goes. Resolve thus, poor sinner, to sit down and consider

consider what thy state is, and what it might be, if thou wouldst but change the bondage of satan for the sweet government of Jesus Christ. First, ask thy soul whether the devil can, after thou hast worn out thy miserable life here in his drudgery, prefer thee to a happy state in the other world, or so much as secure thee from a state of torment and woe? If he cannot, whether there be not one Jesus Christ, who is able and willing to do it? and if so, whether it be not bloody cruelty to thy precious soul, to stay any longer under the shadow of this bramble, when thou mayest make so blessed a change? A few of these thoughts abidingly laid home to thy soul, may (God striking in with them) shake the foundations of the devil's prison, and make thee haste as fast from him, as one out of a house on fire about his ears.

Secondly, Satan hath his instruments to oppose the messengers and overtures which God sends by them to bring the sinner out of satan's rule. When Moses came to deliver Israel out of the Egyptian bondage, up starts Jannes and Jambres to resist him. When Paul preached to the deputy, the devil hath his chaplain at court to hinder him; Elymas, one that was *full of all subtilty and mischief.* Some or other (to be sure) he will find, when God is parleying with a sinner, and persuading him to come over to Christ, that shall labour to clog the work. Either carnal friends, these he sends to plead his cause, or old companions in wickedness, these bestir them, one while labouring to jeer him out of his new way; or if that take not, by turning their old love into bitter wrath against him for playing the apostate, and leaving him so. Or if he will not be stopped in his way, then he hath his daubing preachers (still like Job's messengers, the last the worst), who with their foul flattering, or rather murdering doctrine, shall go about to heal his wound slightly. Now as ever you desire to get out of satan's bondage, have a care of all these, harden thyself against intreaties of carnal friends and relations. Resolve that if thy children should hang about thy knees to keep thee from Christ, thou wilt throw them away. If thy father and mother should lie prostrate at thy feet, rather than not go to Christ, go over their very backs to him. Never can we part with their love upon such advantageous terms as these. And for thy brethren in iniquity, I hope thou dost not mean to stay while thou hast their good will, then even ask the devil's also. Heaven is but little worth if thou hast not a heart to despise a little shame, and bear a few frumps from profane Ishmaels for thy hopes of it. Let them spit on thy face, Christ will wipe it off; let them laugh, so thou winnest. If they follow not thy example before they die, the shame will be their own; God himself shall spit it on their face before men and angels, and then kick them into hell. And, lastly, escape but the snare of those flatterers, who use their

tongues only to lick sinners consciences whole with their *placentia's*, soothing doctrine, and thou art fair for a Christ; ask not counsel of them; they may go about to give you ease, but all those stitches with which they sew up thy wounds, must be ripped open, or thou diest for it.

Thirdly, Satan labours to put off the sinner with delays.—Floating, flitting thoughts of repenting he fears not; he can give sinners leave to talk what they will do, so he can beg time, and by his art keep such thoughts from coming to a head, and ripening into a present resolution; few are in hell but thought of repenting, but satan so handled the matter, that they could never pitch upon the time in earnest when to do it. If ever thou meanest to get out of his clutches, fly out of his doors, and run for thy life; wherever this warning finds thee, stay not, though in the midst of thy joys, with which thy lusts entertain thee: As the paper which came to Brentius (from that senator his dear friend) took him at supper with his wife and children, and bade him flee *cito, citius, citissime;* which he did, leaving his dear company and sweet cheer; so do thou, or else thou mayest repent thy stay when 'tis too late. A vision chargeth the *wise men* to go back another way, and not so much as see Herod, though he had charged them otherwise. O go not back, drunkard, to thy good fellows, adulterer to thy queans; covetous wretch, to thy usury and unlawful gain: turn another way, and gratify not the devil a moment. The command saith, now repent; the imperative hath no future tense. God saith, *To-day while it is to-day:* the Devil saith to-morrow; which wilt thou obey, God or him? Thou sayest, thou meanest at last to do it, then why not now? Wilt thou stand with God for a day or two, huckle with him for a penny? Heaven is not such a hard penny-worth, but thou mayest come up to his terms: and which is the morrow thou meanest? Thou hast but a day in thy life, for aught thou knowest: where then canst thou find to-morrow for repentance? but shouldst thou have as many days to come as Methuselah lived, yet know, sin is hereditary, and such sort of diseases grow more upon us with our years. 'Tis with long accustomed sinners, as with those who have sat long under a government, they rather like to be as they are (though but ill on it) than think of a change; or like those who in a journey have gone out of the way all the day, will rather take any new way, over hedge or ditch, than think of going so far back to be set right.

Fourthly, Satan labours to compromise the business, and bring it to a composition between him and Christ; when conscience will not be pacified, then satan for quiet's sake will yield to something, as Pharaoh with Moses: after much ado, he is willing they should go, Exod. viii. 28. *And Pharaoh said, I will let you go,*

that

that you may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness.— But then comes in this caution, *only you shall not go very far away.* Thus satan will yield, the sinner may pray and hear the word, and make a goodly profession, so he doth not go very far, but that he may have him again at night. If God hath the matins, he looks for the vigils, and thus he is content the day should be divided. Doth conscience press a reformation and change of the sinner's course? rather than fail, he will grant that also; yet as Pharaoh when he yielded they should go, he meant *their little ones should stay behind as a pledge for those that went*, Exod. x. 11. So satan must have some one sin that must be spared, and no matter though it be a little one. Now if ever you would get out of the devil's rule, make no composition with him. Christ will be King or no King. Not a hoof must be left behind, or any thing which may make an errand for thee afterwards to return. Take therefore thy everlasting farewell of every sin, as the sincere and fixed purpose of thy heart, or thou doest nothing. Paul joins his faith and his purpose together, 2 Tim, iii. 10. not the one without the other. At the promulgation of the law in Sinai, God did, as it were, give Israel the oath of allegiance to him; then he told them what law he would rule them by, and they gave their consent: this was the *espousal* which God puts them in mind of, Jer. ii. in which they were solemnly married together, as king and subjects. Now mark, before God would do this, he will have them out of Egypt. They could not obey his laws, and Pharaoh's idolatrous customs also, and therefore he will have them out, before he solemnly espouseth them to be a nation peculiarly his. Thou must be a widow before Christ marry thee; he will not lie by the side of another's wife. O that it were come to this! then the match would soon be made between Christ and thee. Let me ask thee, poor soul, hast thou seriously considered who Christ is, and what his sweet government is? and couldst thou find in thy heart (out of an inward abhorrency of sin and satan, and a liking to Christ) to renounce sin and satan, and choose Christ for thy Lord! Doth thy soul say, as Rebecca, *I will go* if I could tell how to get to him. But alas! I am here a poor prisoner, I cannot shake off my fetters, and set myself at liberty to come unto Christ. Well, poor soul, canst thou groan heartily under thy bondage? then for thy comfort know, thy deliverance is at the door; he that heard the cry of Israel in Egypt, will hear thine also, yea, come and save thee out of the hands of thy lusts. He will not, as some, who entangle thy affections by making love to thee, and then give over the suit, and come at thee no more.— If Christ has won thy heart, he will be true for thee, and be at all the cost to bring thee out of thy prison-house also; yea, take the pains to come to thee himself, and bring with him these wedding-

garments, in which he will carry thee from thy prison to his Father's house with joy, where thou shalt live not only as a subject under his law, but as a bride in the bosom of his love; and what can be added to thy happiness more? when thy prince is thy husband, and that such a prince to whom all other are vassals, even the prince of the world himself; and yet so gracious, that his majesty hinders not his familiar converse with thee a poor creature, but adds to the condescent thereof, therefore God chooseth to mix names of greatness and relation together; the one to sweeten the other: *Thy Maker is thy husband, thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. The God of the whole earth shall he be called*, Isa. liv. 5. And to usher in those promises with titles of greatest dread and terror to the creature, that hold forth the greatest condescensions of love: how can God stoop lower than come and dwell with a poor humble soul? which is more than if he had said, such a one should dwell with him; for a beggar to live at court is not so much as the king to dwell with him in his cottage. Yet this promise is ushered in with the most magnificent titles: *Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite spirit*, Isa. lvii. 15. and why such titles? but to take away the fears which his saints are prone to take up from them. Will the high and lofty One (saith the humble soul) look on me a poor worm? will the holy God come near such an unclean creature, saith the contrite one? Isaiah himself cried he was undone at the sight of God, and this attribute proclaimed before him, Isa. vii. How God prefixeth these, that the creature may know his majesty and holiness, which seems so terrible to us, are no prejudice to his love; yea, so gracious a prince is thy husband, that he delights rather his saints should call him by the names of love, than state. *Thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt no more call me Baali*, Hos. ii. 16.—That is, my husband, not my Lord.

SECT. IV.—*Doct.* The second point follows. Ignorance, above other sins, enslaves a soul to satan; a knowing man may be his slave, but an ignorant one can be no other. Knowledge doth not make the heart good, but it is impossible without knowledge it should be good. There are some sins which an ignorant person cannot commit, there are more which he cannot but commit: knowledge is the key, Luke xi. 52. Christ the door, John xv. Christ opens heaven, knowledge opens Christ. In three particulars the point will appear more fully.

First, Ignorance opens a door for sin to enter.

Secondly, As ignorance lets sin in, so it locks it up into the soul, and the soul in it.

Thirdly, As it locks it up, so it shuts all means of help out.

First,

First, Ignorance opens the door for satan to enter in with his troops of lusts; where the watch is blind, the city is soon taken: an ignorant man sins, and, like drunken Lot, he knows not when the tempter comes, nor when he goes; he is like a man that walks in his sleep, knows not where he is, nor what he does.—*Father, forgive them* (saith Christ), *they kn w not what they do.* The Apostle, 1 Cor. xv. having reproved the sensuality of some, verse 32. who made the consideration of death, by which others are awed from sin, a provocation to sin, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die,* he gives an account of this reasoning; *All have not the knowledge of God.* An ignorant person is a man in shape, and a beast in heart. *There is no knowledge in the land,* saith the prophet, Hosea iv. 2. and see what a regiment follows this blind captain, swearing, lying, killing, stealing, and what not? We read, 2 Tim. iii. 5. of some *laden with sin;* here are trees full of bitter fruit, and what dung shall we find at the root, that makes them so fruitful, but ignorance? *silly women,* and such *who never come to the knowledge of the truth.*

Secondly, Ignorance, as it lets sin in, so it locks it up, and the soul in it; such a one lies in satan's inner dungeon, where no light of conviction comes; darkness inclines to sleep; a blind mind and drowsy conscience go together. When the storm arose, the mariners who were awake, fell a praying to their God; but the sleeper fears nothing. Ignorance lays the soul asleep under the hatches of stupidity. God hath planted in the beast a natural fear of that which threatens hurt to it. Go to thrust a beast into a pit, and it hangs back, nature shews its abhorrency. Man, being of a nobler nature, and subject to more dangers, God hath set a double guard on him; as a natural fear of danger, so a natural shame that covers the face at the doing of an unworthy action. Now an ignorant man hath slipped from both these his keepers; he sins and blusheth not, because he knows not his guilt: he wants that magistrate within, who should put him to shame; neither is he afraid, because he knows not his danger; therefore he plays with his sin, as a child with the waves, that by and by will swallow him up. Conscience is God's alarm to call the sinner up; it doth not always ring in his ear that hath knowledge, being usually set by God to get off at some special hour; when God is speaking in an ordinance, or striking in a providence; but in an ignorant soul, this is silent. The clock cannot go when the weights are taken off; conscience is only a witness to what it knows.

Thirdly, Ignorance shuts out the means of recovery. Friends and ministers, yea, Christ himself, stands without, and cannot help the creature, as such threatenings and promises are of no use; he fears not the one, he desires not the other, because he

knows neither: Heaven-way cannot be found in the dark; and therefore the first thing God doth is to spring in with a light, and let the creature know where he is, and what the way to get out of his prison-house, without which all attempts to escape are in vain. There is some glimmering light in all: *Non dantur puræ tenebræ*, I think, is good divinity as well as philosophy: and this night-light may discover many sins, produce inward pricklings of conscience for them; yea, stir up the creature to step aside, rather than drown in such broad waters. There are some sins so cruel and costly, that the most prostrate soul may in time be weary of their service for low ends; but what will all this come to, if the creature be not acquainted with Christ the true way to God, faith and repentance the only way to Christ? Such a one, after all this bustle, instead of making an escape from satan, will run full into his mouth another way. There are some ways which at first seem right to the traveller; yet wind about so insensibly, that when a man hath gone far, and thinks himself near home, he is carried back to the place from whence he set forth. This will befal every soul ignorant of Christ, and the way of life through him; after many years travel, as they think, towards heaven, by their good meanings, blind devotions, and reformation, when they shall expect to be within sight of heaven, they shall find themselves even where they were at first, as very slaves to satan as ever.

Use 1. This speaks to you that are parents, see what need you have of instructing your children, and training them up betimes in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Till these chains of darkness be knocked off their minds, there is no possibility of getting them out of the devil's prison; he hath no such tame slave as an ignorant soul: Such a one goes before satan (as the silly sheep before the butcher), and knows not who he is, nor whither he carries him; and can you see the devil driving your children to the shambles, and not labour to rescue them out of his hands? Bloody parents you are, that can thus harden your bowels against your own flesh. Now the more to provoke you to your duty, take these considerations.

1. Your relation obligeth you to take care of their precious souls. 'Tis the soul is the child, rather than the body; and therefore in scripture it is put for the whole man. Abraham and Lot went forth *with all the souls they had gotten in Haran*, Gen. xii. *So, all the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt;* that is, all the persons. The body is but the sheath; and if one should leave his sword with you to be kept safely for him, would you throw away the blade, and only preserve the scabbard? And yet parents do commonly judge of their care and love to their children by providing for the outward man, by their breeding and teaching them

them how to live like men (as they say) when they are dead and gone, and comport themselves to their civil place and rank in the world. These things indeed are commendable; but is not the most weighty business of all forgotten in the mean time, while no endeavour is used that they may live as Christians, and know how to carry themselves in duty to God or man as such? And can they do this without the knowledge of the holy rule they are to walk by? I am sure David knew no means effectual without this, and therefore propounds the question, *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* and he resolves it in the next words, *by taking heed thereto according to thy word*, Psal. cxix. 9.— And how shall they compare their way and the word together, if not instructed? Our children are not born with bibles in their heads or hearts. And who ought to be the instructor, if not the parent? yea, who will do it with such natural affection? As I have heard sometimes a mother say, in other respects, Who can take such pains with my child, and be so careful as myself that am its mother? Bloody parents then they are, who acquaint not their children with God or his word; what do they but put them under a necessity of perishing, if God stir not up some to shew more mercy than themselves to them. Is it any wonder to hear that ship to be sunk, or dashed upon a rock, which was put to sea without card or compass? No more is it, they should ingulph themselves in sin and perdition, that are thrust forth into the world (which is a sea of temptation) without the knowledge of God, or their duty to him. In the fear of God, think of it, as parents; your children have souls, and these God set you to watch over; it will be a poor account at the last day, if you can only say, Lord, here are my children, I bred them complete gentlemen, left them rich and wealthy. The rust of that silver you left them will witness your folly and sin, that you would do so much for that which rusts, and nothing for the enriching their minds with the knowledge of God, which would have endured for ever; happy if you had left them less money and more knowledge.

2. Consider, it hath ever been the saints practice to instruct and teach their children the way of God. David we find dropping instruction into his son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxviii. . . *Know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.* Though a king, he did not put it off to his chaplains, but whetted it on him with his own lips. Neither was queen Bathsheba forgetful of her duty; her gracious counsel is upon record, Prov. xxxi. and that she may do it with more seriousness and solemnity, we find her stirring up her motherly bowels, to let her son see that she fetched her words deep, even from her heart; *What my son, and what the son of my womb! and what the son of my vows!* ver. 2. Indeed, that counsel is

most like to go to the heart, which comes from thence. Parents know not what impression such melting expressions of their love, mingled with their instructions, leave on their children. God bids *draw forth our souls to the hungry*; that is more than draw our purse, which may be hard and churlish. Thus we should draw forth our souls with our instructions. What need I tell of Timothy's mother and grand-mother, who acquainted him with the scriptures from his youth? And truly, I think, that man calls in question his own saintship, and takes no care to acquaint his child with God, and the way that leads to him. I have known some, that, though prophane themselves, have been very solicitous that their children should have good education; but never knew I a saint that was regardless whether his child knew God or not.

3. It is an act of great unrighteousness not to instruct our children. We read of some *that hold the truth in unrighteousness*; among others, those parents do it, that lock up the knowledge of those saving truths from their children, which God hath imparted to themselves. There is a double unrighteousness in it.

First, They are unrighteous to their children, who may lay as much claim to their care of instructing them, as to their labour and industry in laying up a temporal estate for them. If he should do unrighteously with his child, that should not endeavour to provide for his outward maintenance, or having gathered an estate, should lock it up, and deny his child necessaries, then much more he that lives in ignorance of God, whereby he renders himself incapable of providing for his child's soul; but most of all, he that having gathered a stock of knowledge, yet hides it from his child.

Secondly, They are unrighteous to God.

First, In that they keep that talent in their own hands which was given to be paid out to their children. When God revealed himself to Abraham, he had respect to Abraham's children; and therefore we find God promising himself this at Abraham's hands, upon which he imparts his mind to him concerning his purpose of destroying Sodom: *Shall I hide from Abraham* (saith God) *that thing which I do? I know that he will command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the way of the Lord*, Gen. xviii. 17—19. The church began at first in a family, and was preserved by the godly care of parents in instructing their children and household in the truths of God, whereby the knowledge of God was transmitted from generation to generation; and though now the church is not confined to such strait limits, yet every private family is a little nursery to the church; if the nursery be not carefully planted, the orchard will soon decay. O could you be willing, Christians, that your children, when you are laid in the dust, should be turned into the degenerate

degenerate plant of a strange vine, and prove a generation that do not know God? Atheism needs not be planted; you do enough to make your children such, if you do not endeavour to plant religion in their minds. The very neglect of the gardener to sow and dress his garden, gives advantage enough to the weeds to come up. This is the difference between religion and Atheism: Religion doth not grow without planting, but will die even where it is planted, without watering. Atheism, irreligion, and prophaneness, are weeds that will grow without setting, but will not die without plucking up; all care and means little enough to stub them up. And therefore you that are parents, and do not teach your children, deal the more unrighteously with God, because you neglect the best season in their whole life for planting in them the knowledge of God, and plucking up the contrary weeds of atheism and irreligion. Young weeds come up with most ease; sinful ignorance in youth becomes wilful ignorance; yea, impudence in age: You will not instruct them when young, and they will scorn their ministers when they are old.

Secondly, You deal unrighteously with God, that train not up your children in the knowledge of God, because your children, if you be Christian parents, are God's children; they stand in a fœderal relation to him, which the children of others do not; and shall God's children be nurtured with the devil's education? Ignorance is that which he blinds the minds of the children of disobedience withal. Shall God's children have no better breeding? The children of a Jew God made account were born to him, *thy sons and daughters whom thou hast born to me*, Ezek. xvi. 20. God had by the covenant which he made with that people, married them unto himself; and therefore, as the wife bears her children to her husband (they are his children), so God calls the children of the Jews his, and complains of it as an horrible wickedness in them, that they should not bring them up as his, but offer them up to Moloch; *they have slain my children* (saith God) ver. 21. And are not the children of a Christian his children, as well as the Jews were? Hath God recalled or altered the first covenant, and cut off the entail? and darest thou slay not only thy children, but the Lord's also? and is not ignorance that bloody knife that doth it? *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*, Hos. iv. 6. Do you not tremble to offer them, not to Moloch, but the devil, whom before you had given up to God, when you brought them to that solemn ordinance of baptism, and there desired, before God and man, that they might become covenant-servants to the Lord? And hast thou bound them to him, and never taught them, either who their Lord and Master is, or what their duty is as his servants? Out of thy own mouth will God condemn thee.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, Consider, you who are parents, that by not instructing your children, you entitle yourselves to all the sins they shall commit to their death. We may sin by a proxy, and make another's fact our own. *Thou hast* (said God by Nathan to David concerning Uriah) *slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon*, 2 Sam. xii. 9. So thou mayest pierce Christ, and slay him over and over with the bloody sword of thy wicked children, if thou beest not the more careful to train them up in the fear of God. There might be something said for that heathen, who, when the scholar abused him, fell upon the master and struck him: indeed 'tis possible he might be most in the fault. When the child breaks the Sabbath, it is his sin; but more the father's, if he never taught him what the command of God was. And if the parent be accessary to the sin of the child, it will be hard for him to escape a partnership, yea, a precedency in the punishment. O what a sad greeting will such have of their children at the great day! Will they not then accuse you to be the murderers of their precious souls, and lay their blood at your door, cursing you to your face, that taught them no better? But grant, that by the interposition of thy timely repentance, thou securest thy soul from the judgment of that day, yet God can scourge thee here for the neglect of thy duty to them. How oft do we see children become heavy crosses to such parents? It is just that they should not know their duty to thee, who didst not teach them their duty to God; or if thou shouldst not live so long as to see this, yet sure thou canst not but go in sorrow to thy grave, to leave children behind thee that are on their way to hell.—Some think, that Lot's lingering so long in Sodom, was his lothness to leave his sons-in-law behind him, to perish in the flames. No doubt (good man) it was very grievous to him, and this might make him stay pleading with them, till the angel pulled him away. And certainly nothing makes holy parents more loth to be gone out of the reach of that fire (before they go) that God will rain upon the heads of sinners. You know not how soon the messenger may come to pluck you hence; do your best while you are among them to win them home to God.

Use 2. To the ministers of the gospel. Let this stir up your bowels of compassion towards those many ignorant souls in your respective congregations, who know not the right hand from the left. This, this is the great destroyer of the country, which ministers should come forth against with all their care and strength. More are swept to hell with this plague of spiritual darkness than any other. Where the light of knowledge and conviction is, there commonly is a sense and pain that accompanies the sinner when he doth evil, which forceth some now and then to enquire for a physician, and come in the distress of their spirits

spirits to the minister or others for counsel; but the ignorant soul feels no smart. If the minister stay till he sends for him to instruct him, he may sooner hear the bell go for him, than any messenger come for him; you must seek them out, and not expect that they will come to you. These are a sort of people that are afraid more of their remedy than their disease, and study more to hide their ignorance, than how they may have it cured; which should make us pity them the more, because they can pity themselves so little. I confess, it is no small unhappiness to some of us, who have to do with a multitude, that we have neither time nor strength to make our addresses to every particular person in our congregations, and attend on them as their needs require, and yet cannot well satisfy our consciences otherwise. But let us look to it, that though we cannot do to the height of what we would, we be not found wanting in what we may. Let not the difficulty of our province make us like some, who, when they see they have more work upon their hands than they can well dispatch, grow sick of it, and sit down out of a lazy despondency, and do just nothing. He that hath a great house running to ruin, and but a small purse, 'tis better for him to repair now a little and then a little, than let all fall down, because he cannot do it all at once. Many ministers may complain of their predecessors, that they left them their people more out of repair than their houses, and this makes the work great indeed: as the Jews, who were to revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, before they could build the wall, yet it went up, because *the people had a mind to work*, Neh. 4. O if once our hearts were but filled with zeal for God, and compassion to our people's souls, we would up, and be doing, though we could but lay a brick a day, and God would be with us. May be you who find a people rude and sottishly ignorant, like stones in the quarry, and trees unfelled, shall not bring the work to such perfection in your days as you desire; yet, as David did for Solomon, thou mayest, by thy pains in teaching and instructing them, prepare materials for another who shall rear the temple. It is very ordinary for one minister to enter into the labours of another, to reap those by a work of conversion, in whom a former minister had cast the seed of knowledge and conviction: And when God comes to reckon with his workmen, the ploughman and sower shall have his penny, as well as the harvest-man and reaper. O, it is a blessed thing to be (as Job saith he was) eyes to the blind, much more to blind souls; such are the ministers. God himself calls *pastors after his own heart, that feed his people with knowledge and understanding*, Jer. iii. 15. But woe to those that are accessary to their people's ignorance! Now a minister may be accessary to the ignorance of his people,

First,

First, By his own ignorance. Knowledge is so fundamental to the work and calling of a minister, that he cannot be one without it: *Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me; seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children,* Hos. iv. 6. The want of knowledge in a minister is such a defect, as cannot be supplied by any thing else, be he never so meek, patient, bountiful, unblameable; if he hath not skill to divide the word aright, he is not cut out for a minister. Every thing is good, as it is good for the end it is appointed to; a knife, though it had a haft of diamonds, yet if it will not cut, 'tis no knife. A bell, if it will not sound, is no bell. The great work of a minister is to teach others, his lips are to preserve knowledge, he should be as conversant in the things of God as others in their particular trades. Ministers are called lights; if the light then be darkness, how great is the darkness of that people like to be? I know these stars in Christ's hands are not all of the same magnitude; there is a greater glory of gifts and graces shines in some than others; yet so much light is necessary to every minister as was in the star the wise men saw at Christ's birth, to be able, out of the word, to direct sinners the safe and true way to Christ and salvation. O, sirs, it is a sad way of getting a living by killing of men, as some unskilful physicians do; but much more to get a temporal livelihood by ruining souls through our ignorance. He is a cruel man to the poor passengers, who will undertake to be pilot, when he never so much as learnt his compass.

Secondly, By his negligence. It is all one if the nurse hath no milk in her breasts, or having, draws it not forth to her child. There is a woe to the *idol-shepherd*, Zech. 11. such as have mouths, but speak not; lips, but not to feed the people with knowledge. It shall be the people's sin, if they feed not when bread is before them; but woe to us, if we give them not meat in due season! O, sirs, what shall we say to our Lord that trusts us, if those abilities which he hath given us, as market-money to buy bread for our people, be found wrapped up in a napkin of sloth? if that time wherein we should have been teaching and instructing them, shall appear to be wasted in our pleasures, or employed about our carnal profits. That servant shall have but a sad welcome of his master when he comes home, that shall be found out of the way with the key, and the family starving in the mean time for want of provision.

Thirdly, By his unedifying preaching, when he preached unsound doctrine, which doth not perfect the understanding, but corrupt it. Better he did leave them in simple ignorance, than colour their minds with a false dye, or when what he preacheth

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is frothy and flashy, no more fit to feed their souls, than husks for the prodigal's belly, which when they know, they are little the wiser for their soul's good. Or when his discourses are so high flown, that the poor people stand gazing, as those who have lost the sight of their preacher, and at the end of the sermon cannot tell what he would have. Or those who preach only truths that are for the higher forms of professors, who have their senses well exercised; excellent may be for the building up three or four saints in the congregation; but in the mean time, the weak ones in the family (who should indeed chiefly be thought on, because least able to guide themselves or carve for themselves), these are forgotten. He sure is an unwise builder, that makes a scaffold as high as Paul's steeple, when his work is at the bottom, and he is to lay the foundation, whereas the scaffold should rise as the building goes up. So Paul advanceth in his doctrine, as his hearers do in knowledge, Heb. vi. 1. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection. Let us.* It is well indeed when the people can keep pace with the preacher. To preach truths and notions above the hearer's capacity, is like a nurse, that should go to feed a child with a spoon too big to go into its mouth. We may by such preaching please ourselves, or some of higher attainments, but what shall poor ignorant ones do in the mean time? He is the faithful steward that considers both. The preacher is (as Paul saith of himself) *a debtor both to the Greek and to the Barbarian, to the wise and to the unwise*, Rom. i. 14. to prepare truths suitable to the degree of his hearers. Let the wise have their portion, but let them be patient to see the weaker in the family served also.

Fourthly, A minister may be accessary to the ignorance of his people, when through the scandal of his life he prejudiceth his doctrine; as a cook, who, by his nastiness, makes others afraid to eat what comes out of his foul fingers; or when, through his supercilious carriage, his poor people dare not come to him. He that will do any good in the minister's calling, must be as careful as the fisher, that he do nothing to scare souls away from him, but all to allure and invite, that they may be tolled within the compass of his net.

Use 3. Is the ignorant soul such a slave to satan? Let this stir you up that are ignorant, from your seats of sloth, whereon, like the blind Egyptians, you sit in darkness; speedily come out of this darkness, and resolve not to go down to utter darkness.—The covering of Haman's face did tell him, that he should not stay in the king's presence, If thou livest in ignorance, it shews thou art in God's black bill; he puts this cover before their eyes in wrath, whom he means to turn off into hell, 2 Cor. iv. *If our gospel be hid, it is to those that perish.* In one place sinners are

are threatened, *they shall die without knowledge*, Job xxxvi. In another place, *they shall die in their sins*, John viii. He indeed that dies without knowledge, dies in his sins: and what more fearful doom can the great God pass upon a creature than this? Better die in a prison, die in a ditch, than die in our sins. If thou die in thy sins, thou shalt rise in thy sins: as thou fallest asleep in the dust, so thou awakest in the morning of the resurrection; if an ignorant Christless wretch, as such thou shalt be arraigned and judged. That God whom now sinners bid depart from them, will then be worth their acquaintance (themselves being judges); but, alas! then he will throw their own words in their teeth, and bid them depart from him, he desires not the knowledge of them. O sinners, you shall see at last, God can better be without your company in heaven, than you could without his knowledge on earth: yet, yet 'tis day, draw your curtains, and behold Christ shining upon your face with gospel-light; hear wisdom crying in the streets, and Christ piping under your window in the voice of his spirit and messengers, *How long will ye simple ones love simplicity, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit upon you, and make known my words unto you*, Prov. i. 21, 22, 23. What can you say, sinners, for your sottish ignorance? Where is your cloak for this sin? The time hath been when the word of the Lord was precious, and there was no open vision, not a Bible to be found in town or country; when the tree of knowledge was forbidden fruit, and none might taste thereof without licence from the pope; happy he that could get a leaf or two of the Testament into a corner, afraid to tell the wife of his bosom. O how sweet were these waters, when they were forced to steal them? But you have the word, or may, in your houses; you have those that open them every Sabbath in their assemblies, many of you at least have the offers of your ministers to take any pains with you in private, passionately beseeching you to pity your souls, and receive instruction: yea, 'tis the lamentation they generally take up, you will not come unto them that you may receive light. How long may a poor minister sit in his study, before any of the ignorant sort will come upon such an errand? Lawyers have their clients, and physicians their patients: these are sought after, and called up at midnight for counsel; but alas! the soul, which is more worth than raiment and body too, that is neglected, and the minister seldom thought on, till both these be sent away. Perhaps when the physician has given them over for dead, then we must come and close up those eyes with comfort, which were never opened to see Christ in his truth, or be counted cruel, because we will not sprinkle them with this holy water, and anoint them for the kingdom of heaven, though they know not a step of the

the way that leads to it. Ah, poor wretches! what comfort would you have us speak to those, to whom God speaks terror? Is heaven ours to give to whom we please? or is it in our power to alter the laws of the Most High, and save those whom he condemns? Do you not remember the curse that is to fall upon his head, *that maketh the blind to wander out of the way?* Deut. xxvii. 18. What curse then would be our portion, if we should confirm such blind souls, that are quite out of the way to heaven, encouraging you to go on, and expect to reach heaven at last, when God knows your feet stand in those paths that lead to eternal death? No, 'tis written, we cannot, and God will not reverse it; you may read your very names among those damned souls which Christ comes in flaming fire to take vengeance on, who the apostle tells us are such, *that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*, 2 Thess. i. 8. And therefore, in the fear of God, let this provoke you, of what age or sex, rank or condition soever in the world, to labour for the saving knowledge of God in Christ, *whom to know is life eternal. Are ye young?* Inquire after God betimes, while your parts are fresh, and memory strong, before the throng of worldly cares divert you, or lusts of youth debauch you. The feet of those lusts which have buried millions of others in perdition, stand ready to carry you the same way, if preventing grace come not and deliver you out of their hands, by seasoning your minds with the knowledge of God. This morning's draught may prevent thy being infected with the ill savours thou mayest receive from the corrupt examples of others. Nay, how long thy stay may be in the world thou knowest not, see whether thou canst not find graves of thy length in the burial place; and if thou shouldst die ignorant of God and his law, what would become of thee? The small brush, and the old logs, young sinners, and those that are withered with age, meet and burn together. Or if thou shouldst stay a while longer here, may be, because thou wilt not learn now, God will teach thee then: or if thou shouldst in thy old age get acquaintance with God, yet 'tis said to be sowing thy seed, when thou mightest be comforting thyself from thy old acquaintance thou hast enjoyed with him. *Are you old and ignorant?* Alas, poor creature! your life in the socket, and this candle of the Lord not set up and lighted in your understanding! your body bowing to the dust, and nature tolling the passing bell, as it were, and you (like one going in the dark) know not whether death will lead you or leave you. 'Tis like, the infirmities of age make you wish your bones were even laid at rest in the grave; but if you should die in this condition, your poor souls would even wish they were here again with their old burdens on their backs: aches and diseases of age are grievous, but damned

souls

souls would thank God, if he would bless them with such a heaven, as to lie in these pains, to escape the torments of the other: O bethink you before you go hence; the less time you have, the more diligence you must use to gain knowledge; we need not be earnest (one would think) to bid the poor prisoner learn his book, that cannot read, when he knows he shall be hanged if he read not his neck-verse. 'Tis not indeed the bare knowing the truths of the gospel, saves; but the gross ignorance of them to be sure will damn souls. *Are you poor?* It is not poverty that is your sin or misery. Were you God's poor, rich in knowledge and faith, you were happy, Eccles. iv. 13. *Better is a poor and wise child, than a foolish king, who will no more be admonished;* yea, so happy, that did the princes of the world understand themselves aright, they would wish themselves in our clothes, how ragged soever they are, rather than be in their own robes; there are better making for you in heaven, which you shall put on, when their's shall be pulled off to their shame: It will not then trouble you that you were, while in the world, poor; but it will torment them that were so rich and great, and so poor to God, and beggarly in their souls.

Are you rich? Labour for the knowledge of the Most High. Solomon had more of the world's treasure than a thousand of you have, and yet we find him hard at prayer, tugging with God for knowledge, 1 Chron. i. 10. All these outward enjoyments are but *vaginæ bonorum*, as afflictions are but *vaginæ malorum*. I am afraid many men think themselves privileged by their worldly greatness from this duty, as if God were bound to save them, because rich. Alas, sirs, there are not so many of you like to come there. I must confess it would make one tremble to think what a small number those among the great ones that shall be saved, are summed up into. *Not many great, not many rich;* why so few saved? Because so few have saving knowledge. O the atheism, the ignorance, the sottish barbarism that is to be found even in those that the world applaud, and even worship because of their lands and estates, who yet are not able to give an account of their faith? A poor leather-coat Christian will shame and catechize a hundred of them. If heaven were to be purchased with house and lands, then these would carry it away from the poor disciples of Jesus Christ; they have their hundreds and thousands lie by them for a purchase always, but this money is not current in heaven's exchange. *This is life eternal, to know thee, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*

Quest. But how may an ignorant soul attain to knowledge?

Ans. First, Be deeply affected with thy ignorance. Some are blind, as Laodicea, and know it not, Rev. iii. 17. As ignorance blinds the mind, so pride is a blind before their ignorance, that they

they know it not. These have such a high opinion of themselves, that they take it ill any should suspect them as such; these of all men are most out of the way to knowledge, they are too good to learn of man, as they think, and too bad to be taught of God.—The gate into Christ's school is low, and these cannot stoop: the master himself is so humble and lowly, that he will not teach a proud scholar. Therefore, first become a fool in thy own eye.—A wiser man than thyself hath confessed much, Prov. xxx. 2, 3. *I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man, I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.* When thou art come to thyself to own and blush at the brutish ignorance of thy mind, thou art fit to be admitted into Christ's school. *If they be ashamed, then shew them the pattern of the house*, Ezek. xliii. 10.

Secondly, Be faithful with that little knowledge thou hast. Art thou convinced this is a sin, and that is a duty? Follow the light close; you know not what this tittle may grow to; we use to set up our children with a little stock at first, and as they use it, so we add. The kingdom of God comes of small beginnings. God complains of Israel, they were *brutish in their knowledge*, Jer. x. 14. He doth not say brutish in their ignorance; had they sinned because they did not know better, this would have excused *a tanto*, but they did that which was brutish and unreasonable, as their worshipping graven images, notwithstanding they knew to the contrary. That man shall not excel in knowledge who prostitutes it to sin, Job xxxvi. 12. *If they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and shall die without knowledge.* A candle pent up close in a dark lanthorn, wastes away apace: and so doth light shut up in the conscience, and not suffered to come forth in the conversation. Those heathens that are charged for *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, Rom. i. 18. the next news you hear of them is, that *they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened*, ver. 21.

Thirdly, Ply the throne of grace. *Bene orasse est bene studuisse;* he is the best student in divinity that studies most upon his knees. Knowledge is a divine gift; all light is from heaven. God is the father of light, and prayer puts the soul under the pupilage of God. *If any one lack wisdom, let him ask it of God.* This is more than naked knowledge, wisdom how to use it. Study may make one a great scholar in the scriptures, but prayer makes a wise Christian, as it obtains sanctified knowledge, without which it is no perfect gift, but *doron adoron*, a gift and no gift. Pray then with an humble boldness, God gives it to all that ask, and that candidly and liberally; not like proud man, who will rather put one to shame who is weak, for his ignorance, than take the pains to teach him. Thy petition is very

pleasing to God. Remember how Solomon sped upon the like occasion, and promise thyself the same success. Christ's school is a free school; he denies none that come to him, so they will submit to the orders of the school; and though all have not an answer in the same degree of knowledge (it is not needful that all should be Solomons in knowledge, except all were to be Solomons in place,) yet the meanest disciple that Christ sends forth shall be furnished with saving knowledge, enough to fit him for his admittance into heaven's academy. *Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and after bring me to glory.*

Fourthly, Thou must bestow some time for thy diligent search after truth. Truth lies deep, and must be digged for. Since man was turned out of Paradise, he can do nothing without labour, except sin (this follows his hand indeed); but this treasure of knowledge calls for spade and mattock. We are bid *search the scriptures*, and, Dan. xii. 4. *Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased;* a metaphor of merchants, who bestir themselves to get an estate, run to and fro, first in one land, then in another; wherever they hear of any thing to be got, thither they post, though to the ends of the earth; thus must the soul run from one duty to another, one while read, and anon meditate of what he hath read, then pray over his meditations, and ask counsel after all. What is the meaning of this, and how understand you that? *Non schola Epicura facit magnos viros, sed contubernium.* There is more light got sometimes by a short conference with a preacher, than by his whole sermon. Be sure thou compass all the means for knowledge within the walk of thy endeavour. In this thy search for knowledge, observe three things.

First, The end thou proposest, that it be pure and holy, not merely to know, as some do, who labour for knowledge, as many for estates, and when they have got it, look on their notions, as they on their bags of money, but have not a heart to use their knowledge for their own or others good; this is a sore evil.—Speculative knowledge, like Rachel, is fair, but barren. Not to be known and admired by others for thy stature in knowledge above thy brethren, verily it is too base an end to aim at in seeking knowledge, especially such as is the knowledge of God and Christ. To see a heathen study for knowledge in philosophy, and then carry all his labour to this market, and think himself rewarded with obtaining the name of a wise man, is, though base, yet more tolerable: but for one that knows God, and what it is to enjoy him; for such a one to content himself with a blast or two of sorry man's vain breath, this is folly with a witness: look thou fliest higher in the end than so. Labour for knowledge, that thou mayest fear God, whom thou knowest; thus David, Psal. cxix.

33. *Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.* The word of God is called a light unto our feet, not to our tongues merely to talk of, but feet to walk by; endeavour for it, not that thou mayest spread thy own name, but celebrate God. As David promiseth, when he understands the precepts of God, then he will talk of his wondrous works, he will trumpet the fame of them, and thereby awaken others to inquire after God.

Secondly, When thy end is right set, then thou must be constant in thy endeavour after it. The mysteries of Christ are not learned in a day. *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord*, Hos. vi. 3. Some are in a good mood (may be), and they will look into the Bible, and read a chapter or two, and away they go for a week, and never practise it more; like some young boys, if at school one day, truant all the week after: is it any wonder such thrive not in knowledge? It is a good speech of Bernard, *Tantum distat studium a lectione, quantum amicitia ab hospitio, socialis affectio a fortuita salutatione.* The study of the word, and the reading of it, differs as much, as the friendship of such who every day converse lovingly together, doth from the acquaintance one hath with a stranger at an inn, or whom he salutes as he passeth by in the streets. If you will get knowledge indeed, you must not only salute the word now and then, but walk with it, and enter into daily converse with it. The three men (who were indeed angels) that stood by Abraham, as he sat at his tent-door, were reserved, and strange, till Abraham invited them into his tent, and entertained them friendly; and then Christ, who was one among them (as appears by the name *Jehovah* given him in several verses, and also by what he promised he would do for Sarah, ver. 10. not what God would do, which, if a created angel, he would), begins to discover himself to Abraham, and reveal his secrets to him. That soul above others shall be acquainted with the secrets of God in his word, that doth not slightly read the word, and, as it were, compliment with it at his tent-door, but desires more intimacy with it, and therefore entertains it within his soul by frequent meditating on it. David compares the word for sweetness to *the honey and the honey-comb.* Indeed it is so full, that at first reading some sweetness will now and then drop from it; but he that doth not press it by meditation, leaves the most behind.

Thirdly, Be sure thou takest the right order and method. Arts and sciences have their rudiments, and also their more abstruse and deep notions; and sure the right end to begin at, is first to learn the principles: he (we say) is not like to make a good scholar in the University, that never was a good grammar-scholar. And they cannot be solid Christians, that are not instructed in

the grounds of Christianity. The want of this is the cause why many are so unstedfast: first of this way, and then of that, blown like glasses into any shape, as false teachers please to breathe.—Alas, they have no centre to draw their lines from. Think it no disgrace, you who have run into error, and lost yourselves in the labyrinths of deep points (which now are the great discourse of the weakest professors), to be set back to learn the first principles of the oracles of God better; too many are, as Tertullian saith in another case, *pudoris magis memores quam salutis*, more tender of their reputation than their salvation, who are more ashamed to be thought ignorant, than careful to have it cured.

Fifthly, If thou wouldst attain to divine knowledge, wait on the ministry of the word. As for those who neglect this, and come not where the word is preached, they do like one that should turn his back on the sun, that he may see it; if thou wouldst know God, come where he hath appointed thee to learn. Indeed, where the means is not, God hath extraordinary ways: as a father, if no school in town, will teach his child at home; but if there be a public school, thither he sends him.—*God maketh manifest* (saith Paul) *the savour of his knowledge by us in every place*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. Let men talk of the spirit what they please; he will at last be found a quencher of the spirit, that is a despiser of prophecy: they both stand close together, 1 Thess. v. 19, 20. *Quench not the spirit*, *Despise not prophecying*. But it is not enough to sit under the means; woeful experience teacheth us this; there are some no sun will tan; they keep their own complexion under the most shining and burning light of the word preached, as ignorant and prophane as those that never saw gospel-day; and therefore, if thou wilt receive any spiritual advantage by the word, take heed how thou hearest.

First, Look thou beest a wakeful hearer. Is it any wonder he should go away from the sermon no wiser than he came, that sleeps the greatest part of it away, or hears between sleeping or waking? It must be in a dream sure, if God reveals any thing of his mind to him. So indeed God did to the fathers of old; but it was not as they prophanely slept under an ordinance. O take heed of such irreverence. He that composeth himself to sleep (as some do) at such a time, or he that is not humbled for it, and that deeply, both of them betray a base and low esteem they have of the ordinance. Surely thou thinkest but meanly of what is delivered, if it will not keep thee awake; yea, of God himself, whose message it is. See how thou art reproved by the awful carriage of a heathen, and that a king: Ehud did but say to Eglon, *I have a message from God unto thee, and he arose out of his seat*, Judg. iii. 20. And thou clappest down on thy seat

to sleep: O how darest thou put such an affront upon the great God? How oft do you fall asleep at dinner, or telling your money? And is not the word of God worth more than these? I should wonder if such sermon-sleepers do dream of any thing but hell-fire. 'Tis dangerous you know to fall asleep with a candle burning by our side; some have been so burnt in their beds: but more dangerous to sleep while the candle of the word is shining so near us. What if you should sink down dead like Eutychus? here is no Paul to raise you, as he had; and that you shall not, where is your security?

Secondly, Thou must be an attentive hearer. He that is awake, but wanders with his eye or heart, what doth he but sleep with his eyes open? It were as good the servant should be asleep in his bed, as when up not to mind his master's business. When God intends a soul good by the word, he draws such a one to listen and hearken heedfully to what is delivered; as we see in Lydia, *who* ('tis said) *attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.* And those, Luke xix. 48. *The people were attentive to hear him.* They did hang on him, as you shall see bees on some sweet flower, or as young birds on the bills of their dams as they feed them; that is the soul which shall get light and life by the word. *Hear, ye children, and attend to know understanding*, Prov. iv. 1. Labour therefore in hearing the word to fix thy quicksilver mind, and set thyself to hear, as 'tis said Jehosaphat did to pray, and that thou mayest, before thou goest, get thy heart into some deep sense of thy spiritual wants, especially of thy ignorance of the things of God, and thy deplored condition by reason of it; till the heart be touched, the mind will not be fixed. Therefore you may observe, 'tis said, *God opened the heart of Lydia, that she attended*, Acts xvi. 14. The mind goes of the will's errand; we spend our thoughts upon what our hearts propose. If the heart hath no sense of its ignorance, or no desires after God, no wonder such a one listens not to what the preacher saith; his heart sends his mind another way. *They sit before thee as my people* (saith God), *but their heart goeth after their covetousness.* They do not come out of such an intent or desire to hear any good to their souls, then they would apply themselves wholly to the work; no, it is their covetousness hath their hearts; and therefore, as some idle servant, when he hath waited on his master, brought him to his pew, then he goes out to his good-fellows at the ale-house, and comes no more till sermon be almost done; so do the thoughts of most when they go to the ordinance, they slip out in the street, market, or shop, you may find them any where but about the duty before them, and all because these have their hearts more than God and his word.

Thirdly, Thou must be a retentive hearer; without this, the

work will ever be to begin again. Truths to a forgetful hearer are as a seal set on water, the impression lasts no longer than the seal is on; the sermon once done, and all is undone; be therefore very careful to fasten what thou hearest on thy memory: which that thou mayest do,

First, Receive the truth in the love of it. An affectionate hearer will not be a forgetful hearer. Love helps the memory; *Can a woman forget her child, or a maid her ornaments, or a bride her attire?* No, they love them too well: were the truths of God thus precious to thee, thou wouldst, with David, think of them day and night. Even when the Christian, through weakness of memory, cannot remember the very words he hears, to repeat them; yea, then he keeps the power and savour of them in his spirit, as when sugar is dissolved in wine, you cannot see it, but you may taste it; when meat is eaten and digested, it is not to be found as it was received, but the man is cheered and strengthened by it, more able to walk and work than before, by which you may know it is not lost: so you may taste the truths the Christian heard, in his spirit, and see them in his life. Perhaps if you ask him what the particulars were the minister had about faith, mortification, repentance, and the like, he cannot tell you; yet this you may find, his heart is more broken for sin, more enabled to rely on the promises, and now weaned from the world. As that good woman answered one, that, coming from sermon, asked her what she remembered of the sermon? said, She could not at present recal much, but she heard that which should make her reform some things as soon as she came home.

Secondly, Meditate on what thou hearest; by this David got more wisdom than his teachers. Observe what truth, what scripture is cleared to thee in the sermon more than before, take sometime in secret to converse with it, and make it thereby familiar to thy understanding. Meditation to the sermon, is what the harrow is to the seed; it covers those truths which else might have been picked or washed away. I am afraid there are many proofs turned down at a sermon, that are hardly turned up, and looked on any more, when the sermon is done; and if so, you make others believe you are greater traders for your souls than you are indeed; as if one should come to a shop and lay by a great deal of rich ware, and when he hath done, goes away, and never calls for it. O take heed of such doings. The hypocrite cheats himself worst at last.

Thirdly, Discharge thy memory of what is sinful. We wipe our table-book, and deface what is there scribbled, before we can write anew. There is such a contrariety betwixt the truths of God and all that is frothy and sinful, that one puts out the other; if you would retain the one, you must let the other go.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Spirituality of the Devil's Nature, and their extreme Wickedness.

THESE words are the fourth branch in the description, *Spiritual wickednesses;* and our contest or combat with them as such, is expressed by the adversitive particle *against: Against the spirituals of wickedness,* which is, as say some, *against wicked spirits;* that is true, but not all. I conceive, with many interpreters, not only the spiritual nature of the devil, and the wickedness thereof to be intended, but also, yea chiefly, the nature and kind of those sins, which these wicked spirits do most usually and vigorously provoke the saints unto, and they are the spirituals of wickedness, not those gross fleshly sins, which the herd of beastly sinners (like swine) wallow in, but sins spiritualized, and this, because it is not *pneumata,* but *pneumatica,* not spirits, but spirituals. The words present us with these three doctrinal conclusions.

First, The devils are spirits.

Secondly, The devils are spirits extremely wicked.

Thirdly, These wicked spirits do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to spiritual wickednesses. First, of the first.

First, They are spirits. Spirit is a word of various acceptation in scripture; amongst others, used often to set forth the essence and nature of angels, good and evil, both which are called spirits. The holy angels, Heb. i. 14. *Are they not all ministering spirits?* The evil, *There came forth a spirit and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him,* 1 Kings xxii. 21., that spirit was a devil. How oft is the devil called the unclean spirit, foul spirit, lying spirit, &c. Sin did not alter their substance; for then, as one saith well, that nature and substance which transgressed could not be punished.

First, The devil is a spirit, that is, his essence is immaterial and simple, not compounded (as corporeal beings are) of matter and form: *Handle and see me* (saith Christ to his disciples that thought they had seen a spirit); *a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have,* Luke xxiv. 39. If they were not thus immaterial, how could they enter into bodies and possess them, as the scripture tells us they have, even a legion into one man? Luke viii. 30. One body cannot thus enter into another.

Secondly, The devils are spiritual substances, not qualities or evil motions arising from us, as some have absurdly conceived.—

So the Sadducees, and others following them, deny any such being as angel, good or evil; but this is so fond a conceit, that we must both forfeit our reason, and deny the scriptures, to maintain it, where we find their creation related, Col. i. 18. the fall of some from their first estate, Jude vi. and the standing of others called the elect angels: The happiness of the one, who behold God's face; and their employment, are sent out to attend on the saints, as servants on their master's heirs, Heb. i. The misery of the other, reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day; and their present work, which is to do mischief to the souls and bodies of men, as far as they are permitted; all which shew their substance plain enough. But so immersed is sorry man in flesh, that he will not easily believe what he sees not with his fleshly eyes; upon the same account we may deny the being of God himself, because invisible.

Thirdly, They are entire spiritual substances, which have every one proper existence: and thus they are distinguished from the souls of men, which are made to subsist in a human body; and together with it to make one perfect man, so that the soul, though when separated from the body, doth exist, yet hath a tendency to union with its body again.

Fourthly, They are, though entire spiritual substances, yet finite, being but creatures. God only is the uncreated, infinite, and absolutely simple spirit, yea, Father of all other spirits.

Now from this spiritual nature of the devil, we may further see what a dreadful enemy we have to grapple with.

First, As spirits, they are of vast intellectual abilities. Sorry man, while in this dark prison of the body, hath not light enough to know what angelical perfections are; that they excel in knowledge all other creatures we know, because as spirits they come nearest by creation to the nature of God that made them; the heavens are not lifted higher from the earth, than angels by knowledge from man, while on earth. Man by art hath learnt to take the height of the stars of heaven, but where is he that can tell how far in knowledge angels exceed man? 'Tis true, they have lost much of that knowledge they had, even all their knowledge as holy angels; what now they know of God hath lost its savour, and they have no power to use it for their own good. What Jude saith of wicked men, may be said of them, *What they know naturally, in these things they corrupt themselves.* They know the holiness of God, but love him not for it, as the elect angels do, and themselves by creation did. They know the evil of sin, and love it not the less; but though they are such fools for themselves, yet have subtilty too much for all the saints on earth, if we had not a God to play our game for us.

Secondly,

Secondly, As spirits, they are invisible, and their approaches also. They come, and you see not your enemy. Indeed this makes him so little feared by the ignorant world, whereas it is his greatest advantage, if rightly weighed. O if men have an apparition of the devil, or hear a noise in the night, they cry, The devil, the devil, and are ready to run out of their wits for fear; but they carry him in their hearts, and walk all the day long in his company, and fear him not. When thy proud heart is clambering up to the pinnacle of honour in thy ambitious thoughts, who sets thee there but the devil? When thy adulterous heart is big with all manner of uncleanness and filthiness, who but satan hath been there, begetting these brats on thy whorish spirit? When thou art raging in thy passion, throwing burning coals of wrath and fury about with thy inflamed tongue, where was it set on fire but in hell? When thou art hurried like the swine down the precipice, and even choked with thy own drunken vomit, who but the devil rides thee?

Thirdly, As spirits, they are immortal. Of other enemies you may hear news at last that they are dead which sought thy life, as the angel told Joseph of Herod. Persecuting men walk a turn or two upon the stage, and are called off by death, and there is an end of all their plots; but devils die not: they will hunt thee to thy grave, and when thou diest they will meet thee in another world, to accuse and torment thee there also.

Fourthly, They are unwearied in their motions. When the fight is over amongst men, the conqueror must sit down and breathe, and so loseth the chace, because not able to pursue it in time. Yea, some have given over their empires, as glutted with the blood of men, and weary of the work, when they cannot have their will as they desired. Thus Dioclesian, because he saw he did but mow a meadow that grew the thicker for cutting down (as Tertullian speaks of the Christians martyred), he throws away his sceptre in a pet. Charles the Fifth did the like (some say) upon the same reason, because he could not root out the Lutherans. But the devil's spirit is never cowed, nor he weary of doing mischief, though he hath never stood still since first he began his walk to and fro in the world. O what would become of us, if a God were not at our back, who is infinitely more the devil's odds than he ours.

SECT. II.—Secondly, They are wicked spirits; wicked in the abstract, as in the text, and called by way of eminency in sin, *The wicked one*, Matt. xiii. 19. As God is called the Holy One, because *none holy as the Lord*, so the devil the wicked one, because he is a non-such in sin. In a few particulars let us endeavour to take the height of the devil's sin, and the rather, that we may judge of the degrees of sins and sinners among the sons of men:

men: the nearer God in holiness, the more holy; the liker the devil, the more wicked.

First, These apostate angels are inventors of sin; the first that sounded the trumpet of rebellion against their maker, and led the dance to all that sin which since hath filled the world. Now what tongue can accent this sin to its full? For such a noble creature whom God hath set on the top, as it were, of all the creation, nearest to himself, from whom God hath kept nothing but his own royal diadem; for this peer and favourite of the court, without any cause or solicitation from any other, to make this bold and blasphemous attempt to snatch at God's own crown, this paints the devil blacker than the thoughts of men and angels can conceive. He is called *the father of lies*, as those who have found out any art are called the father of it. *Jubal the father of all such as handle the harp and organ;* he invented music. And this is a dreadful aggravation, because they sinned without a tempter. And though man is not in such a degree capable of this aggravation, yet some men sin after the very similitude of the devil's transgression in this respect, who, as St Paul, Rom. i. 30. styles them, *are inventors of evil things.* Indeed sin is an old trade, found out to our hand; but, as in other trades and arts, some famous men arise, who add to the inventions of others, and make trades and arts (as it were) new, so there are some infamous in their generation, that make old sins new, by superadding to the wickedness of others. Uncleanness is an old sin from the beginning, but the Sodomites will be filthy in a new way; and therefore it carries their name to this day. Some invent new errors, others new oaths, such as are of their own coining, hot out of the mint; they scorn to swear after the old fashion; others, new devices of persecuting, as Julian had a way by himself, different from all before him; and to the end of the world every age will exceed others in the degrees of sinning. Ishmael and the mockers of the old world, were but children and bunglers to the scoffers and cruel mockers of the last time. Well, take heed of shewing thy wit in inventing new sins, lest thou stir up God to invent new punishments. *Is not destruction to the wicked, and a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?* Job xxxi. 3. Sodom sinned after a new mode, and God destroys them after a new way, sends hell from above upon them. Some have invented new opinions, monstrous errors, and God hath suited their monstrous errors with births as monstrous of their own body.

Secondly, They were not only the inventors of sin, but are still the chief tempters to, and promoters of, sin in the world, therefore called *Pierazon*, the tempter; and sin called *the work of the devil*, whoever commits it; as the house goes by the name of the master-workman, though he useth his servants' hands to build it.

O take heed of soliciting others to sin; thou takest the devil's office (as I may say) out of his hand; let him do it himself, if he will, make not thyself so like him. To tempt another, is worse than to sin thyself. It speaks sin to be of great growth in that man that doth it knowingly and willingly. Herbs and flowers shed not their seed till ripe, creatures propagate not till of stature and age. What do those that tempt others, but diffuse their wicked opinions and practices, as it were, raise up seed to the devil, thereby to keep up the name of their infernal father in the world? This shews sin is mighty with them indeed. Many a man, though so cruel to his own soul as to be drunk or swear, yet will not like this in a child or servant; what are they then but devils incarnate, who teach their children the devil's catechism, to swear and lie, drink and whore? If you meet such, be not afraid to call them (as Paul did Elymas, when he would have perverted the deputy) children of the devil, full of all subtilty and mischief, and enemies of all righteousness. O do you not know what you do, when you tempt? I will tell you; you do that which you cannot undo by your own repentance; thou poisonest one with error, initiatest another into the devil's school (ale-house I mean); but afterwards, may be, thou seest thy mistake, and recantest thy error, thy folly, and givest over thy drunken trade: art thou sure now to rectify and convert them with thyself? Alas, poor creatures! this is out of thy power! They, may be, will say, as he, (though he did it upon a better account,) that was solicited to turn back to popery, by him who had before persuaded him to renounce the same, *You have given me one turn, but shall not give me another.* And what a grief to thy spirit will it be, to see these going to hell on thy errand, and thou not able to call them back? Thou mayest cry out, as Lamech, *I have slain a man to my wounding, and a young man to my hurt.* Nay, when thou art asleep in thy grave, he whom thou seducest may have drawn in others, and thy name may be quoted to commend the opinion and practice to others; by which (as it is said, though in another sense, *Abel being dead, yet speaks,*) thou mayest, though dead, sin in those that are alive, generation after generation. A little spark, kindled by the error of one, hath cost the pains of many ages to quench it; and when thought to be out, hath broke forth again.

Thirdly, They are not barely wicked, but maliciously wicked. The devil's name denoteth his spiteful nature, his desire to vex and mischieve others. When he draws souls to sin, it is not because he tastes any sweetness, or finds any profit therein; he hath too much light to have any joy or peace in sin; he knows his doom, and trembles at the thought of it, and yet his spiteful nature makes him vehemently desire, and incessantly endeavour the

the damnation of souls. As you shall see a mad dog run after a flock of sheep, kill one, then another, and when dead, not able to eat of their flesh, but kills to kill: so satan is carried out with a boundless rage against man, especially against the saints; he would not, if he could, leave one of Christ's flock alive; such is the height of his malice against God, whom he hates with a perfect hatred, and because he cannot reach him with a direct blow, therefore he strikes him at second hand through his saints; that wicked arm which reacheth not to God, is extended against these excellent on the earth, well knowing the life of God is in a manner bound up in theirs. God cannot outlive his honour, and his honour speeds as his mercy is exalted or depressed; this being the attribute God means to honour in their salvation so highly, and therefore maligned above the rest by satan. And this is the worst that can be said of these wicked spirits, that they maliciously spite God, and in God the glory of his mercy.

Use 1. First, This may help us to conceive more fully what the desperate wickedness of man's nature is, which is so hard to be known, because it can never be seen at once, it being a fountain whose immensity consists not in the stream of actual sin (that is visible, and may seem little), but in the spring that incessantly feeds this; but here is a glass that will give us the shape of our hearts truly like themselves. Seest thou the monstrous pitch and height of wickedness that is in the devil? All this there is in the heart of every man; there is no less wickedness potentially in the tamest sinner on earth, than in the devils themselves; and that one day thou, whoever thou art, wilt shew to purpose, if God prevent thee not by his renewing grace; thou art not yet fledged, thy wings are not grown to make thee a flying dragon, but thou art of the same brood, the seed of this serpent is in thee, and the devil begets a child like himself; thou yet standest in a soil not so proper for the ripening of sin, which will not come to its fulness till transplanted into hell. Thou art here so maidenly and modest, as to blush at some sins out of shame, and forbear the acting of others out of fear; when there, thou shalt see thy case as desperate as the devil doth his, then thou wilt spit out thy blasphemies, with which thy nature is stuffed, with the same malice that he doth. The Indians have a conceit, that, when they die, they shall be transformed into the deformed likeness of the devil? therefore, in their language they have the same word for a dead man and the devil: sin makes the wicked like him before they come there; but indeed they will come to their countenance more fully there, when those flames shall wash off that paint which here hides their complexion. The saints in heaven shall be like the angels in their alacrity, love, and constancy to serve God, and the damned like the devils in sin as well as punishment. This one consideration

consideration might be of excellent use to unbottom a sinner, and abase him, so as never to have high thoughts of himself. It is easy to run down a person whose life is wicked, and convince him of the evil of his actions, and make him confess what he doth is evil; but here is the thicket we lose him in: he will say, 'Tis true, I am overseen, I do what I should not, God forgive me; but my heart is good. Thy heart good, sinner! and so is the devil's; his nature is wicked, and thine as bad as his. These pimples in thy face shew the heat of thy corrupt nature within; and without gospel-physic, the blood of Christ applied to thee, thou wilt die a leper; none but Christ can give thee a new heart, till which, thou wilt every day grow worse and worse. Sin is an hereditary disease, that increaseth with age. A young sinner will be an old devil.

Use 2. Again, It would be of use to the saints, especially those in whom God, by his timely call, forestalled the devil's market; as sometimes the spirit of God takes sin in its quarters before it comes into the field, in the sins of youth: now such a one, finding not those daring sins committed by him that others have been left unto, may possibly not be affected so with his own sin, or God's mercy. O let such a one behold here the wickedness of his heart in this glass of the devil's nature, and he will see himself as great a debtor to the mercy of God as Manasses, or the worst of sinners, as in pardoning, so in preventing the same cursed nature with theirs, before it gave fire on God with those bloody sins they committed. That thou didst not act such outrageous sins, thou art beholden to God's gracious interference, and not to the goodness of thy nature, which hath the devil's stamp on it; for which God might have crushed thee, as we do the brood of serpents before they sting, knowing what they will do in time.—Who will say that Faux suffered unjustly, because the parliament was not blown up? It was enough that the materials for that massacre were provided, and he taken there with match and fire about him ready to lay the train; and canst thou say when God first took hold on thee, that thou hadst not those weapons of rebellion about thee, a nature fully charged with enmity against God, which in time would have made its own report of what for the present lay, like unfired powder, silent in thy bosom? O Christian, think of this, and be humbled for thy villainous nature, and say, Blessed be God, that sent his spirit and grace so timely to stay thy hand (as Abigail to David), while thy nature meditated nothing but war against God and his laws!

Again, Thirdly, Are the devils so wickedly malicious against God himself? O sirs, take the right notion of sin, and you will hate it. The reason why we are so easily persuaded to sin, is, because we understand not the bottom of his design in drawing a creature

creature to sin. It is with men in sinning, as it is with armies in fighting: captains beat their drums for volunteers, and promise all that list pay and plunder, and this makes them come trouling in; but few consider what the ground of the war is, against whom, or for what. Satan enticeth to sin, and gives golden promises of what they shall have in his service, with which silly souls are won; but how few ask their souls, Whom do I sin against? What is the devil's design in drawing me to sin? Shall I tell thee? Dost thou think 'tis thy pleasure or profit he desires in thy sinning? Alas! he means nothing less, he hath greater plots in his head than so. He hath by his apostacy proclaimed war against God, and he brings thee by sinning to espouse his quarrel, and to jeopard the life of thy soul in defence of his pride and lust; which that he may do, he cares no more for the damnation of thy soul, than the *Great Turk* doth to see a company of his slaves cut off for the carrying on of his design in a siege: and darest thou venture to go into the field upon his quarrel against God? O earth, tremble thou at the presence of the Lord. This bloody Joab sets thee where never any came off alive. O stand not where God's bullets fly, throw down thy arms, or thou art a dead man. Whatever others do, O ye saints, abhor the thoughts of sinning willingly, which when you do, you help the devil against God; and what more unnatural, than for a child to be seen in arms against his father?

CHAP. VII.

Of Satan's Plot to defile the Christian's Spirit with Heart-Sins. The Second Point follows.

Doct. 2. THAT these wicked spirits do chiefly annoy the saints with, and provoke them to spiritual sins. Sins may be called spiritual upon a double account, either from the subject wherein they are acted, or from the object about which they are conversant.

First, In regard of the subject; when the spirit or heart is the stage whereon sin is acted, this is a spiritual sin; such are, all impure thoughts, vile affections, and desires; though the object be fleshly lust, yet are they spiritual sins, because they are purely acts of the soul and spirit, and break not forth unto the outward man.

Secondly, In regard of the object, when that is spiritual, and not carnal, such as are idolatry, error, spiritual pride, unbelief, &c. both which Paul calls *the filthiness of the spirit*, and distinguisheth them from *filthiness of the flesh*, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

SECT.

SECT. I.—First, of the first, satan labours what he can to provoke the Christian to heart-sins, to stir up and foment these inward motions of sin in the Christian's bosom; hence it is, he can go about no duty but these his imps (as I may call them) haunt him; one motion or other darts in to interrupt him, as Paul tells us of himself; *When he would do good, evil was present with him:* if a Christian should turn back whenever these cross the way of him, he should never go on his journey to heaven. It is the chief game the devil hath left to play against the children of God, now his field army is broken, and his commanding power taken away which he had over them, to come out of these his holds where he lies skulking, and fall upon the rear with these suggestions. He knows his credit now is not so great with the soul as when it was his slave; then no drudgery work was so base, that it would not do at his command; but now the soul is out of this bondage, and he must not think to command another's servant as his own: no, all he can do is to watch the fittest season (when the Christian least suspects), and then to present some sinful motion handsomely drest up to the eye of the soul, that the Christian may (before he is aware) take this brat up, and handle it in his thoughts, till at last he makes it his own by embracing it; and this he knows will defile the soul: and may be this boy sent in at the window may open the door to let in a greater thief; or if he should not so prevail, yet the guilt of these heart-sins, yea, their very neighbourhood, will be a sad vexation to a gracious heart, whose nature is so pure that it abhors all filthiness (so that to be haunted with such motions, is as if a living man should be chained to a stinking carcase, that, wherever he goes, he must draw that after him), and whose love is so dear to Christ, that it cannot bear the company of those thoughts without amazement and horror, which are so contrary and abusive to his beloved. This makes satan so desirous to be ever raking in the unregenerate part, that, as a dunghill stirred, it may offend them both with the noisome streams which arise from it.

SECT. II.—*Use* 1. First, let this be for a trial of thy spiritual state. What entertainment finds satan when he comes with these spirituals of wickedness, and solicits thee to dwell on them? Canst thou dispense with the filthiness of thy spirit, so thy hands be clean? Or dost thou wrestle against these heart sins as well as others? I do not ask whether such guests come within thy door; for the worst of sins may be found in the motions of them, not only passing by the door of a Christian, but looking in also; as holy motions may be found stirring in the bosom of wicked men: But I ask thee, whether thou canst find in thy heart to lodge these guests, and bid them welcome? 'Tis like thou wouldst not be seen to walk in the street with such company, not lead a whore

whore by the hand through the town; not violently break open thy neighbour's house to murder or rob him; but canst thou not under thy own roof, in the withdrawing room of thy soul, let thy thoughts hold up an unclean lust, while thy heart commits speculative folly with it? Canst thou not draw thy neighbour into thy den, and there rend him limb from limb by thy malice, and thy heart not so much as cry murder, murder? In a word, canst thou hide any one sin in the inner room of thy heart, there to save the life of it when enquired after by the word and spirit, as Rahab hid the spies, and sent the king of Jericho's messengers to pursue them, as if they had been gone? Perhaps thou canst say, The adulterer, the murderer, is not here, thou hast sent these sins away long ago, and all this while thou hidest them in the love of thy soul; know it, or thou shalt another day know it to thy cost, thou art stark naught. If there were a spark of the life of God or the love of Christ in thy bosom, though thou couldst not hinder such motions in thy soul, yet thou wouldst not conceal them, much less nourish them in thy bosom; when overpowered by them, thou wouldst call in help from heaven against these destroyers of thy soul.

Use 2. Secondly, shew thy loyalty, O ye saints, to God by a vigorous resistance of, and wrestling against, these spirituals of wickedness. First, consider, Christian, heart-sins are sins as well as any; *The thought of foolishness is sin*, Prov. xxiv. 9.—Mercury is poison in the water distilled, as well as in the gross body. Uncleannesss, covetousness, murder, are such in the heart as well as in the outward; every point of hell is hell. Secondly, consider, thy spirit is the seat of the Holy Spirit. He takes up the whole heart for his lodgings, and 'tis time for him to be gone when he sees his house let over his head. Defile not thy spirit, till thou art weary of his company. Thirdly, consider, there may be more wickedness in a sin of the heart, than of the hand and outward man; for the aggravation of these is taken from the behaviour of the heart in the act. The more of the heart and spirit is let out, the more malignity is let in to any sinful act. *To backslide in heart*, is more than to backslide; 'tis the comfort of a poor soul when tempted and troubled for his relapses, that though his foot slides, yet his heart turns not back, but faceth Christ and heaven at the same time; so *to err in thy heart* is worse than to have an error in the head; therefore God aggravates Israel's sin with this, *They do always err in their heart*, Heb. iii. 10. Their hearts run them upon the error; they liked idolatry, and so were soon made to believe what pleased them best. As on the contrary, the more of the heart and spirit is in any holy service, the more real goodness there is in it, though it fall short of others in the outward expression. The widow's two

mites

mites surpassed all the rest, Christ himself being judge: so in sin, though the internal acts of sin in thoughts and affections seem light upon man's balance, if compared with outward acts, yet these may be so circumstanced, that they may exceed the other in God's account. Peter lays the accent of Magus's sin on the wicked *thought*, which his words betrayed to be in his heart: *Pray God, if perhaps the thought of thy heart may be forgiven*, Acts viii. 22. Saul's sin in sparing Agag, and saving the best of the sheep and oxen, which he was commanded to destroy, was materially a far less sin than David's adultery and murder, yet is made equal with a greater than both, even witchcraft itself, 1 Sam. xv. 23.; and whence received his sin such a dye, but from the wickedness of his heart, that was worse than David's when deepest in the temptation? Fourthly, if satan get into thy spirit and defile it, O how hard wilt thou find it to stay there? Thou hast already sipt of his broth, and now art more likely to be overcome at last to sit down and make thy full meal of that, which by tasting hath vitiated thy palate already. It were strange, if while thou art musing and thy heart hot with the thought of lust, the fire should not break forth at thy lips, or worse.

Quest. But what help have we against this sort of satan's temptation?

Ans. I suppose thee a Christian that maketh this question; and if thou dost it in the plainness of thy heart, it proves thee one. Who besides will or can desire in earnest, to be eased of these guests? Even when a carnal heart prays for deliverance from them, he would be loth his prayer should be heard. *Not yet, Lord*, the heart of such a one cries, as Austin confessed of himself. Sin is as truly the offspring of the soul, as children are of our bodies; and it finds as much favour in our eyes, yea, more; for the sinner can slay a son to save a sin alive, Micah vi. 7. and of all sins, none are more made of than these heart-sins.

First, Because they are the first-born of the sinful heart, and the chiefest strength of the soul is laid out upon them.

Secondly, Because the heart hath more scope in them than in outward acts. The proud man is staked down oft to a short state, and cannot ruffle it in the world, and appear to others in that pomp he would; but within his own bosom he can set up a stage, and his own foolish heart present himself as great a prince as he pleaseth. The malicious can kill in his desires as many in a few minutes, as the angel smote in a night in Sennacherib's host. Nero thus could slay all Rome on the block at once.

Thirdly, These sins stay with the soul when the others leave it; when the sinner hath crippled his body with drunkenness and filthiness, and proves *miles emeritus*, cannot follow the devil's camp any longer in those ways, then these cursed lusts will enter-

tain the sinner with stories of his old pranks and pleasures. In a word, these inward lusts of the heart have nothing but the conscience of a Deity to quell them. Other sins put the sinner to shame before men, and as some that believed on Christ durst not confess him openly, because they loved the praise of men, so there are sinners who are kept from vouching their lust openly, from the same tenderness to their reputation; but here is no fear of that, if they can but forget that heaven sees them, or persuade themselves there is no danger from thence; the coast then is clear, they may be as wicked as they please. These make inward sins so hugged and embraced. If thou therefore canst find thy heart set against these, I may venture to call thee a real Christian; and for thy help against them,

First, Be earnest with God in prayer to move and order thy heart in its thoughts and desires. If the tongue be such an unruly thing that few can tame. O what is the heart, where such a multitude of thoughts are flying forth as thick as bees from the hive, and sparks from the furnace! It is not in man, not in the holiest on earth, to do this without divine assistance. Therefore we find David so often crying out in this respect to order his steps in his word, to unite his heart to his fear, to incline his heart to his testimonies. As a servant, when the child he tends is troublesome, and will not be ruled by him, calls out to the father to come to him, who no sooner speaks but all is hush with him; no doubt holy David found his heart beyond his skill or power, that makes him so oft do its errand to God. Indeed God hath promised thus much to his children, to order their steps for them, Psalm xxxvii. 22. only he looks they should bring their hearts to him for that end. *Commit thy work to the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established*, Prov. xvi. 3. or ordered. Art thou setting thy face towards an ordinance, where thou art sure to meet satan, who will be disturbing thee with worldly thoughts, and may be worse? let God know from thy mouth whither thou art going, and what thy fears are; never doth the soul march in so goodly order, as when it puts itself under the conduct of God.

Secondly, Set a strong guard about thy outward senses: these are satan's landing places, especially the eye and the ear. Take heed what thou importest at these; vain discourse seldom passeth without leaving some tincture upon the heart; as unwholesome air inclines to putrefaction things sweet in themselves, so unsavoury discourse to corrupt the mind that is pure: look thou breathest therefore in a clear air. And for thy eye, let it not wander; wanton objects cause wanton thoughts. Job knew his eye and his thoughts were like to go together, and therefore, to secure one, he covenants with the other, Job xxxi. 1.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, Often reflect upon thyself in a day, and observe what company is with thy heart. A careful master will ever and anon be looking into his work-house, to see what his servants are doing, and a wise Christian should do the same. We may know by the noise in the school, the master is not there: much of the misrule in our bosoms ariseth from the neglect of visiting our hearts. Now when thou art parleying with thy soul, make this three-fold inquiry.

First, Whether that which thy heart is thinking on be good or evil. If evil and wicked, such as are proud, unclean, distrustful thoughts, shew thy abhorrence of them, and chide thy soul sharply for so much as holding conference with them, of which nought can come but dishonour to God, and mischief to thy own soul; and stir up thy heart to mourn for the evil neighbourhood of them, and by this thou shalt give a testimony of thy faithfulness to God. When David mourned for Abner, all Israel, 'tis said, *understood that day, that it was not of the king to slay Abner:* Thy mourning for them will shew these thoughts are not so much of thee, as of satan.

Secondly, If they be not broadly wicked, inquire whether they be not empty, frothy, vain imaginations, that have no subserviency to the glory of God, thy own good, or others; and if so, leave not till thou hast made thyself apprehensive of satan's design on thee in them; though such are not for thy purpose, yet they are for his; they serve his turn to keep thee from better.—All the water is lost that runs beside the mill, and all thy thoughts are waste which help thee not to God's work withal in thy general or particular calling. The bee will not sit on a flower where no honey can be sucked, neither should the Christian.—Why sittest thou here idle (thou shouldst say to thy soul), when thou hast so much to do for God and thy soul, and so little time to dispatch it in?

Thirdly, If thou findest they are good for matter thy heart is busied about, then inquire whether they be good for time and manner, which being wanting, they degenerate.

First, For the season; that is good fruit which is brought forth in its season. Christ liked the work his mother would have put him upon, as well as herself, John ii. but his time was not come. Good thoughts and meditations misplaced, are, like some interpretations of scripture, good truths, but bad expositions; they fit not the place they are drawn from, nor these the time. To pray when we should hear, or be musing on the sermon when we should pray, this is to rob God one way to pay him another.

Secondly, Carefully observe the manner. Thy heart may meditate a good matter, and spoil it in the doing. Thou art (may be) musing of thy sins, and affecting thy heart into a sense of

them, but so, that while thou art stirring up thy sorrow, thou weakenest thy faith on the promise, that is thy sin. He is a bad chirurgeon, that, in opening a vein, goes so deep that he cuts an artery, and lames the arm, if not kills the man. Or art thou thinking of thy family, and providing for that; this thou oughtest to do, and art worse than an infidel if thou neglectest; but may be these thoughts are so distracting and distrustful as if there were no promise, no providence to relieve thee. God takes this ill, because it reflects upon his care of thee; O how near doth our duty here stand to our sin! so much care is necessary ballast to the soul; a little more sinks it under the waves of unbelief; like some things very wholesome, but one degree more of hot or cold would make them poison.

CHAP. VIII.

How Satan labours to corrupt the Christian's Mind with Error.

THE second sort of spiritual sins are such as are not only acted in the spirit, but are conversant about spiritual objects proper to the soul's nature, that is a spirit; and not laid out in carnal passions of fleshly lusts, in which the soul acts but as a pander for the body, and partakes of their delights only by way of sympathy; for as the soul feels the body's pains no other way than by sympathy, so neither doth it share in the pleasures of the flesh by any proper taste it hath of them, but only, from its near neighbourhood with the body, doth sympathize with its joy; but in spiritual wickednesses that corrupt the mind, here the soul moves in its own sphere, with a delight proper to itself; and there are no less of these than the other. There is hardly a fleshly lust, but hath some spiritual sin analogical to it; as they say, there is no species of creatures on the land, but may be patterned in the sea. Thus the heart of man can produce spiritual sins answering carnal lusts; for whoredom and uncleanness of the flesh, there is idolatry, called in scripture spiritual adultery, from which the seat of Antichrist is called spiritual *Sodom*; for sensual drunkenness, there is a drunkenness of the miud, intoxicating the judgment with error, a drunkenness of the heart in cares and fears; for carnal pride in beauty, riches, honour, there is a spiritual pride of gifts, graces, &c. Now satan in an especial manner assaults the Christian with such as these; it would require a larger discourse than I can allow, to run over the several kinds of them; I shall of many pick out two or three. As, first, satan labours to

to corrupt the mind with erroneous principles; he was at work at the very first plantation of the gospel, sowing his weeds, as soon almost as Christ his wheat, which sprung up in pernicious errors, even in the apostles' times, which made them take the weeding-hook into their hands, and in all their epistles labour to countermine satan in this design. Now satan hath a threefold design in this his endeavour to corrupt the minds of men, especially professors, with error.

SECT. I.—First, He doth this in despite to God, against whom he cannot vent his malice at a higher rate, than by corrupting his truth, which God hath so highly honoured, Psalm cxxxviii. 2. *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* Every creature bears the name of God; but in his word and truth therein contained 'tis writ at length, and therefore he is more choice of this, than of all his other works; he cares not much what becomes of the world and all in it, so he keeps his word, and saves his truth: Ere long we shall see the world on a light flame; the heavens and earth shall pass away, *but the word of the Lord endures for ever.* When God will, he can make more such worlds as this; but he cannot make another truth, and therefore he will not loss one jot thereof. Satan knowing this, sets all his wits on work to deface this, and disfigure it by unsound doctrine. The word is the glass in which we see God, and seeing him are changed into his likeness by his spirit. If this glass be cracked, then the conceptions we have of God will misrepresent him unto us; whereas the word in its native clearness sets him out in all his glory unto our eye.

Secondly, He endeavours to draw us into this spiritual sin of error, as the most subtle and effectual means to weaken, if not destroy, the power of godliness in us. The apostle joins the spirit of power and a sound mind together, 2 Tim. i. 7. Indeed the power of holiness in practice depends much on the soundness of judgment. Godliness is the child of truth, and it must be nursed, if we will have it thrive, with no other milk than of its own mother. Therefore we are exhorted to *desire the sincere milk of the word, that we may grow thereby*, 1 Pet. ii. 2. If this milk be but a little dashed with error, it is not so nutritive. All error, how innocent soever any seem (like the ivy), draws away the strength of the soul's love from holiness. Hosea tells us, whoredom and wine take away the heart; now error is spiritual adultery. Paul speaks of his espousing them to Christ: When a person receives an error, he takes a stranger into Christ's bed, and it is the nature of adulterous love to take away the wife's heart from her husband, that she delights not in his company so much as of her adulterous lover: and do we not see it at this day fulfilled? Do not many shew more zeal in contending

for one error, than for many truths? How strangely are the hearts of many taken off from the ways of God, their love cooled to the ordinances and messengers of Christ? And all this occasioned by some corrupt principle got into their bosoms, which controuls Christ and his truth, as Hagar and her son did Sarah and her child. Indeed Christ will never enjoy true conjugal love from the soul, till like Abraham he turns these out of doors.—Error is not so innocent a thing as many think it; it is as unwholesome food to the body, that poisons the spirits, and surfeits the whole body, which seldom passeth away without breaking out into sores. As the knowledge of Christ carries a soul above the pollution of the world, so error entangles and betrays it to those lusts, whose hands it had escaped.

Thirdly, Satan, in drawing a soul into this spiritual sin, hath a design to disturb the peace of the church, which is rent and shattered when this fire-ship comes among them. *I hear* (saith Paul) *there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it, for there must be heresies*, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19. implying that divisions are the natural issue of heresy. Error cannot well agree with error, except it be against the truth: then indeed (like Pilate and Herod) they are easily made friends; but when truth seems to be overcome, and the battle is over with that, then they fall out among themselves; and therefore it is no wonder if it be so troublesome a neighbour to truth. O sirs, what a sweet silence and peace there was among Christians a dozen years ago! Methinks the looking back to these blessed days in this respect (though they had also another way their troubles, yet not so uncomfortable, because that storm united, but this scatters, the saint's spirits), is joyous! to remember in what unity and love Christians walked, that the persecutors of those times might have said, as their predecessors did of the saints in primitive times, *See how they love one another*; but now, alas! they may jeer and say, See how they that loved so dearly, are ready to pluck one another's throats out.

SECT. II.—*Use.* The application of this shall be only in a word of exhortation to all, especially you who bear the name of Christ by a more eminent profession of him. O beware of this soul-infection, this leprosy of the head. I hope you do not think it needless, for 'tis the disease of the times. The plague is begun, yea, spreads apace; not a flock, a congregation hardly, that hath not this scab among them. Paul was a preacher the best of us all may write after, and he presseth this home upon the saints; yea, in the constant course of his preaching, it made a piece of his sermon, Acts xx. 30, 31. He sets us preachers also on this work: *Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock; for I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter;*

also

also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things; therefore watch. And then he presents his own example, that he hardly made a sermon for several years, but this was part of it, to warn every one night and day with tears. We need not prophecy what impostors may come upon the stage, when we go off; there are too many at present above board of this gang, drawing disciples after them. And if it be our duty to warn you of them, surely 'tis yours to watch, lest you by any of them be led into temptation this hour thereof, wherein satan is let loose in so great a measure to deceive the nation. May you not as easily be soured with this leaven as the disciples, whom Christ bids beware?—Are you privileged above those famous churches of Galatia and Corinth, many of which were bewitched with false teachers, and in a manner turned to another gospel? Is satan turned orthodox, or have his instruments lost their cunning, who hunt for souls? In a word, is there not a sympathy between thy corrupt heart and error? Hast thou not a disposition, which, like the *foams* of the earth, makes it natural for these weeds to grow in thy soil? Seest thou not many prostrated by this enemy, who sat upon the mountain of their faith, and thought it should never have been removed? Surely they would have taken it ill to have been told, You are the men and women that will decry Sabbaths, which now ye count holy; you will turn Pelagians, who now defy the name; you will despise prophecy itself, who now seem so much to honour the prophets; you will throw family duties out of doors, who dare not now go out of doors till you have prayed there. Yet these, and more than these, are come to pass, and doth it not behove thee (Christian) to take heed lest thou fallest also? And that thou mayest not,

First, Make it thy chief care to get a thorough change of thy heart. If once the root of the matter be in thee, and thou beest bottomed by a lively faith on Christ, thou art then safe: I do not say wholly free from all error, but this I am sure, free from ingulphing thy soul in damning error. *They went out from us* (saith St John), *but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us,* 1 John ii. 19. As if he had said, They had some outward profession, and common work of the spirit with us, which they have either lost or carried over to the devil's quarters, but they never had the unction of the sanctifying spirit. By this, ver. 20. he distinguisheth them, and comforts the sincere ones, who possibly might fear their own fall by their departure: *But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.* 'Tis one thing to know a truth, and another to know it by unction. An hypocrite may do the former, the saint only the latter. It is this unction which gives the soul the savour of the knowledge of Christ: those are

the fit prey for impostors who are enlightened, but not enlivened. Oh 'tis good to have the heart established with grace; this is an anchor will keep us from being set adrift, and carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, as the apostle teacheth us, Heb. xiii. 9.

Secondly, Ply the work of mortification: Crucify the flesh daily. Heresy, though a spiritual sin, yet by the apostle reckoned among the deeds of the flesh, Gal. v. 20. because it is occasioned by fleshly motives, and nourished by carnal food and fuel. Never any turned heretic, but flesh was at the bottom; either they served their belly, or a lust of pride; 'twas the way to court, or secured their estates, and saved their lives, as sometimes the reward of truth is fire and faggot; some bud or other is in the straw when least seen, and therefore it's no wonder heresies should end in the flesh, which in a manner sprang from it. The rheum in the head ascends in fumes from the stomach, and returns thither, or unto the lungs, which at last fret and ulcerate: Carnal affections first send up their fumes to the understanding, clouding that, yea, bribing it to receive such and such principles for truths, which embraced, fall down into the life, corrupting that with the ulcer of prophaneness. So that, Christian, if once thou canst take off thy engagements to the flesh, and become a free-man, so as not to give thy vote to gratify thy carnal fears or hopes, thou wilt then be a sure friend to truth.

Thirdly, Wait conscionably on the ministry of the word. Satan commonly stops the ear from hearing sound doctrine, before he opens it to embrace corrupt. This is the method of souls apostatizing from truth, 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4. *They shall turn their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.* Satan, like a cunning thief, draws the soul out of the road into some lane or corner, and there robs him of the truth. By rejecting of one ordinance, we deprive ourselves of the blessing of all others: Say not that thou prayest to be led into the truth; he will not hear thy prayer, if thou turnest thine ear from hearing of the law. He that loves his child, when he sees him play the truant will whip him to school: If God loves a soul, he will bring him back to the word with shame and sorrow.

Fourthly, When thou hearest any unusual doctrine, though never so pleasing, make not up the match hastily with it; have some better testimony of it, before you open your heart to it.—The apostle indeed bids us *entertain strangers* (for some have entertained angels unawares), Heb. xiii. 3.; but he would not have us carried about with *strange doctrine*, v. 9. By this, I am sure some have entertained devils. I confess 'tis not enough to reject a doctrine, because strange to us, but ground we have to wait and inquire. Paul marvelled that the Galatians were so

soon

soon removed from him who had called them unto the grace of Christ, unto another gospel; they might sure have stayed till they had acquainted Paul with it, and asked his judgment: What, no sooner an impostor come into the country and open his pack, but buy all his ware at first sight! O friends, were it not more wisdom to pray such new notions over and over again, to search the word and our hearts by it, yea, not to trust our own hearts, but call in council from others? If your minister have not so much credit with you, get the most holy, humble, and established Christians you can find. Error is like fish, which must be eaten new, or it will stink. When those dangerous errors sprung up first in *New England*, O how unsettled were many of the churches! what an outcry was made, as if some mine of gold had been discovered! but in a while, when those errors came to their complexion, and it was perceived whither they were bound, to destroy churches, ordinances, and power of godliness; then such as feared God, who had stept aside, returned back with shame and sorrow.

CHAP. IX.

Of Pride of Gifts, and how Satan tempts the Christian thereto.

THE second spiritual wickedness which satan provokes unto, especially the saint, is spiritual pride. This was the sin which made him of a blessed angel a cursed devil; and as it was his personal sin, so he chiefly labours to derive it to the sons of men; and he so far prevailed on our first parents, that ever since this sin hath and doth claim a kind of regency in the heart, making use both of good and bad to draw her chariot. First, of evil; pride enters into the labours of other sins; they do but work to make her brave, as subjects to uphold the state and grandeur of their prince. Thus you shall see some drudge and toil, cheat, cozen, oppress; and what mean they? O 'tis to get an estate to maintain their pride. Others fawn and flatter, lie, dissemble, and for what? to help pride up some mount of honour. Again, it maketh use of that which is good; it can work with God's own tools, his ordinances, by which the Holy Spirit advanceth his kingdom of grace in the hearts of his saints. These often are prostituted to pride. A man may be very zealous in prayer, and painful in preaching, and all the while pride is the master whom he serves, though in God's livery. It can take sanctuary in the holiest actions, and hide himself under the skirt of

of virtue itself. Thus while a man is exercising his charity, pride may be the idol in secret for which he lavisheth out his gold so freely, It is hard starving this sin; there is nothing almost but it can live on; nothing so base that a proud heart will not be lift up with, and nothing so sacred but it will prophane, even dare to drink in the bows of the sanctuary; nay, rather than starve, it will feed on the carcases of other sins. This minion pride will stir up the soul to resist, yea, in a manner, kill some sins, that she may boastingly shew the head of them, and blow the creature up with the conceit of himself above others; as the Pharisee, who, through pride, bragged that he was not as the publican; so that pride, if not looked to, will have to do every where, and hath a large sphere it moves in. Nothing indeed (without divine assistance) the creature hath or doth, but will soon become a prey to this devourer; but I am not to handle it in its latitude. Pride is either conversant about carnal objects, as pride of beauty, strength, riches, and such like, or about spiritual; the latter we shall speak a little to. I confess, for the former, possibly a saint may be catched in them, no sin to be slighted, yet not so commonly, for ordinarily pride is of those perfections which are suitable, if not proper to the state and calling we are in: Thus the musician, he is proud of the skill he hath in his art, by which he excels others of his rank. The scholar, though he can play perhaps as well, yet is not proud of that, but looks on it as beneath him; no, he is proud of his learning and choice notions; and so of others. Now the life of a Christian, as a Christian, is superior to the life of man as a man; and therefore he doth not value himself by these which are beneath him, but in higher and more raised perfections, which suit a Christian's calling. As a natural man is proud of perfections suitable to his natural estate, as honour, beauty; so the Christian is prone chiefly to be puffed up with perfections suitable to his life; I shall name three: Pride of gifts, pride of grace, pride of privileges; these are the things which satan chiefly labours to entangle him in.

SECT. I.—First, Pride of gifts. By gifts I mean those supernatural abilities, with which the spirit of God doth enrich and endow the minds of men, for edification of the body of Christ; of which gifts the apostle tells us there is great diversity, and all from the same spirit, 1 Cor. xii. 4. There is not greater variety of colours and qualities in plants and flowers, with which the earth, like a carpet of needle-work, is variegated for the delight and service of man, than there is of gifts in the minds of men, natural and spiritual, to render them useful to one another, both in civil societies, and Christian fellowship. The Christian, as well as man, is intended to be a sociable creature; and for the better managing

managing this spiritual commonwealth among Christians, God doth wisely and graciously provide and impart gifts, suitable to the place every one stands in to his brethren, as the vessels are larger or less in the body natural, according to their place therein. Now satan labours what he can to taint these gifts, and fly-blow them with pride in the Christian, that so he may spoil the Christian's trade and commerce, which is mutually maintained by the gifts and graces of one another. Pride of gifts hinders the Christian's trade, at least thriving by their commerce, two ways.

First, Pride of gifts is the cause why we do so little good with them to others.

Secondly, Why we receive so little good from the gifts of others.

First, Pride of gifts hinders the doing of good by them to others, and that upon a threefold account.

First, Pride diverts a man from aiming at that end; so far as pride prevails, the man prays, preaches, &c. rather to be thought good by others; rather to enthrone himself than Christ, in the opinions and hearts of his hearers. Pride carries the man aloft, to be admired for the height of his parts and notions, and will not suffer him to stoop so low as to speak of plain truths, or if he does, not plainly; he must have some fine lace, though on a plain stuff; such a one may tickle the ear, but is very unlikely to do real good to the soul; alas! it is not that he intends.

Secondly, If this painted Jezebel of pride be perceived to look out at the window in any exercise, whether of preaching, prayer, or conference, it doth beget a disdain in the spirits of those that hear such a one, both good and bad. 'Tis a sin very odious to a gracious heart, and often makes the stomach go against the food, though good, through their abhorrence of that pride they see in the instrument. It is indeed their weakness; but woe to them that by their pride lead them into temptation: Nay, those that are bad, and may be in the same kind, like not that in another, which they favour in themselves, and so prejudiced, return as bad as they went.

Thirdly, Pride of gifts robs us of God's blessing in the use of them. The humble man may have satan at his right hand to oppose him; but be sure the proud man shall find God himself there to resist him, whenever he goes about any duty. God proclaims so much, and would have the proud man know whenever he meets him he will oppose him; *He resists the proud.* Great gifts are beautiful as Rachel, but pride makes them also barren like her: Either we must lay self aside, or God will lay us aside.

Secondly, Pride of gifts hinders the receiving of good from others.

others. Pride fills the soul, and a full soul will take nothing from God, much less from man, to do it good. Such a one is very dainty: it is not every sermon, though wholesome food, nor every prayer, though savoury, will go down; he must have a choice dish, he thinks he hath better than this of his own; and is such a one like to get good? And truly we may see it, that as the plain ploughman that can eat of any homely food, if wholesome, hath more health, and is able to do more work in a day, than many enjoy or can do in their whole life, that are nice, and squeamish, and courtly in their fare; so the humble Christian, that can feed on plain truths, and ordinances, which have not so much of the art of man to commend them to their palate, enjoy more of God, than the nicer sort of professors, who are all to be served in a lordly dish of rare gifts. The church of Corinth was famous for gifts above other churches, 1 Cor. i. but not in grace; none so charged for weakness in that, 1 Cor. iii. 2. He calls them *carnal, babes in Christ,* so weak, as not able to digest man's meat; *I have fed you,* saith Paul, *with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able.* Why? what is the matter? the reason lies, ver. 3. *Ye are carnal, there is among you envy and strife,* ver. 4. *One saith, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos.* Pride makes them take parts, and make sides, one for this preacher, another for that, as they fancied one to excel another. And this is not the way to thrive. Pride destroys love, and love wanting edification is lost. The devil hath made foul work in the church by this engine. Zanchy tells of one in Geneva, who being desired to go to hear Viretus, that preached at the same time with Calvin, answered his friend, If Paul were to preach, *relicto Paulo Calvinum audirem;* I would leave Paul himself to hear Calvin. And will pride in the gifts of another so far transport, even to the borders of blasphemy? What work then will pride make, when the gifts are a man's own.

SECT. II.—*Use* 1. Doth satan thus stir up saints to this spiritual pride of gifts? First, here is a word to you that have mean gifts, yet truth of grace—be content with thy condition. Perhaps when thou hearest others, how enlargedly they pray, how able to discourse of the truths of God, and the like, thou art ready to go into a corner, and mourn to think how weak thy memory, how dull thy apprehension, how straitened thy spirit, hardly able (though in secret) to utter and express thy mind to God in prayer. O thou art ready to think those the happy men and women, and almost murmur at thy condition; well, canst thou not say, Though I have not words, I hope, I have faith; I cannot dispute for the truth, but I am willing to suffer for it; I cannot remember a sermon, but I never heard the word, but I hate

sin

sin and love Christ more than ever? Lord, thou knowest I love thee. Truly (Christian) thou hast the better part; thou little thinkest what a mercy may be wrapt up even in the meanest of thy gifts, or what temptations their gifts expose them to, which God, for aught I know, may in mercy deny thee. Joseph's coat made him finer than his brethren, but this caused all his trouble, this set the archers a shooting their arrows into his side; thus great gifts lift a saint up a little higher in the eyes of men, but it occasions many temptations which thou meetest not with, that art kept low. What with envy from their brethren, malice from satan, and pride in their own hearts, I dare say none find so hard a work to go to heaven as such; much ado to bear up against those waves and winds, while thou creepest along the shore under the wind to heaven. It is with such, as with some great lord of little estate; a meaner man oft hath money in his purse, when he hath none, and can lend his lorship some at a need. Great gifts and parts are titles of honour among men, but many such may come and borrow grace and comfort of a mean-gifted brother; possibly the preacher of his poor neighbour. O poor Christian, do not murmur or envy them, but rather pity and pray for them; they need it more than others; his gifts are thine, thy grace is for thyself; thou art like a merchant that hath his factor goes to sea, but he hath his adventure without hazard brought home. Thou joinest with him in prayer, hast the help of his gifts, but not the temptation of his pride.

Use 2. Secondly, Doth satan labour thus to draw to pride of gifts? This speaks a word to you whom God hath given more gifts than ordinary—beware of pride, that is now your snare. Satan is at work; if possible, he will turn your artillery against yourself; thy safety lies in thy humility; if this lock be cut, the legions of hell are on thee. Remember whom thou wrestlest with, spiritual wickedness; and their play is lift up, that they may give the sorer fall. Now the more to stir up thy heart against it, I shall add some soul-humbling considerations.

First, Consider these spiritual gifts are not thy own, and wilt thou be proud of another's bounty? Is not God the founder, and can he not soon be the confounder of thy gifts? Thou that art proud of thy gourd, what wilt thou be when it is gone? Surely then thou wilt be peevish and angry; and truly thou takest the course to be stript of them. Gifts come on other terms than grace. God gives grace as a free-hold; it hath the promise of this and another world; but gifts come on liking; though a father will not cast off his child, yet he may take away his fine coat and ornaments, if proud of them.

Secondly, Gifts are not merely for thyself. As the light of the sun is ministerial, it shines not for itself; so all thy gifts are for

for others: *Gifts for the edifying of the body.* Suppose a man should leave a chest of money in your hands to be distributed to others, what folly is it in this man to put this into his own inventory, and applaud himself that he hath so much money? Poor soul, thou art but God's executor, and by the time thou hast paid all the legacies, thou wilt see little left for thee to brag and boast of.

Thirdly, Know (Christian) thou shalt be accountable for these talents: Now with what face can a proud soul look on God? Suppose one left an executor to pay legacies, and this man should pay them, not as legacies of another, but gifts of his own. Christ at his ascension gave gifts, that his children should receive; thou hast some in thy hand; now a proud soul gives out all, not as the legacy of Christ, but as his own; he assumes all to himself. O, how abominable is this, to entitle ourselves to Christ's honours!

Fourthly, Thy gifts commend thee not to God. Man may be taken with thy expression and notion in prayer; but these are all pared off when thy prayer comes before God. *O woman* (saith Christ), *great is thy faith!* not polite and flourishing thy language. It were good after our duties to sort the ingredients of which they are made up, what grace contributed, and what gifts, and what pride, and when all the heterogeneal stuff is severed, you shall see in what a little compass the actings of grace in our duties will lie.

Fifthly, Consider, while thou art priding in thy gifts, thou art dwindling and withering in thy grace. Such are like corn that runs up much into straw, whose ear commonly is but light and thin. Grace is too much neglected, where gifts are too highly prized; we are commanded to be clothed with humility. Our garments cover the shame of our bodies, humility the beauty of the soul; and as a tender body cannot live without clothes, so neither can grace without this clothing of humility. It kills the spirit of praise, when thou shouldst bless God, thou art applauding thyself. It destroys Christian love, and stabs our fellowship with the saints to the heart: A proud man hath not room enough to walk in company, because the gifts of others he thinks stand in his way. Pride so distempers the palate, that it can relish nothing that is drawn from another's vessel.

Sixthly, It is the fore-runner of some great sin, or some great affliction. God will not suffer such a weed as pride to grow in his garden, without taking some course or other to root it up; may be he will let thee fall into some great sin, and that shall bring thee home with shame. God useth sometimes a thorn in the flesh, to prick the bladder of pride in the spirit; or at least some great affliction, the very end whereof is *to hide pride from man,* Job xxxiii. 17, 18. As you do with your hot-metaled horses, ride them over plowed lands to tame them, and then you

can

can sit safely on their back. If God's honour be in danger through thy pride, then expect a rod, and most likely the affliction shall be in that which will be most grievous to thee, in the thing thou art proud of. Hezekiah boasted of his treasure, God sends the Chaldeans to plunder him. Jonah was fond of his gourd, and that is smitten; and if thy spirit be blown up with the pride of gifts, thou art in danger of having them blasted, at least in the opinion of others, whose breath of applause (possibly) was a means to overset thy unballast spirit.

SECT. III.—Quest. *But how would you direct us against this?*

Ans. Arguments you have had before. I shall only therefore point to two or three doors, where your enemy comes forth upon you; and surely the very sight thereof, if thou beest loyal to Christ, will stir thee up to fall upon it.

First, Pride discovers itself in dwelling upon the thoughts of our gifts, with a secret kind of content to see our face, till at last we fall in love with it. We read of some, whose *eyes are full of the adulteress, and cannot cease from sin;* a proud heart is full of himself, his own abilities cast their shadow before him; they are in his eye wherever he goes; the great subject and theme of his thoughts is what he is, and what he hath above others, applauding himself, as Bernard confesseth, that (when one would think he had little leisure for such thoughts) even in preaching, pride would be whispering in his ear, O well done, Bernard.—Now have a care (Christian) of chatting with such company. Run from such thoughts as from a bear. If the devil can get thee to stand on this pinnacle, while he presents thee with the glory of his spiritual attainments and endowments, for thee to gaze on them, thy weak head will soon turn round in pride; and therefore labour to keep the sense of thy own infirmities lively in thy soul, to divert the temptation. As those who are subject to some kind of fits, carry about them things proper for the disease, that when the fit is coming (which oft is occasioned with a sweet perfume) they may use them for their help. Sweet scents are not more dangerous for them, than any thing that may applaud thee is to thy soul. Have a care therefore not only of wearing such thoughts in thy own bosom, but also of sitting by others, that bring the sweet scent of thy perfections to thee by their flattery.

Secondly, This kind of pride appears in a forwardness to expose itself to view. David's brethren were mistaken in him indeed, 1 Sam. xvii. 18.; but oft the pride and naughtiness of the heart break out at this door. Christ's carnal friends bid Christ shew himself; pride loves to climb up, not as Zaccheus to see Christ, but to be seen himself. *The fool* (Solomon tells us) *hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself,*

self, Prov. xviii. 2. Pride would be somebody, and therefore comes abroad to court the multitude, whereas humility delights in privacy; as the leaves do cover and shade the fruits, that some hand must gently lift them up before they can see the fruit, so should humility and a holy modesty conceal the perfections of the soul, till a hand of providence by some call invites them out.—There is a pride in naked gifts as well as in naked breasts and backs: humility is a necessary veil to all other graces; and therefore first, Christian, look whenever thou comest forth to public duty, that thou hast a call: it is obedience to be ready to answer when God calls thee forth; but it is pride to run before God speaks. Secondly, when called, earnestly implore divine strength against this enemy: shun not a duty for fear of pride; thou mayest shew it in the very seeming to escape it, but go in the strength of God against it; there is more hope of overcoming it by obedience than disobedience.

Thirdly, In envying the gifts of others, when they seem to blind our own, that they are not so fair a prospect as we desire. This is a weed may grow too rank in a good soil. Aaron and Miriam could not bear Moses' honour, Numb. xii. 1. That was the business, though they picked a quarrel with him about his wife (because an Ethiopian) as appears plainly, ver. 2. *Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not also spoken by us?* They thought Moses went away with too much of the honour, and did repine that God should use him more than themselves. And it is observable, the lusting for flesh broke out among the mixt multitude and baser sort of people, Numb. xi. 4, 5. But this of pride and envy took fire in the bosoms of the most eminent for place and piety. O what need then have we, poor creatures, to watch our hearts, when we see such precious servants of God led into temptation? *The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy*, Jam. iv. 5. Our corrupt nature is ever putting on to this sin. It is as hard to keep our hearts and this sin asunder, as it is to hinder two lovers from meeting together. Thatch is not more ready to be fired with every flash of lightning, than the heart to be kindled at the shining forth of any excelling gift or grace in another. It was one of the first windows that corrupt nature looked out at, a sin that shed the first blood; Cain's envy hatched Abel's murder. Now if ever thou meanest to get the mastery of this sin,

First, Call in help from heaven. No sooner hath the apostle set forth how big and teeming full the heart of man is with envy, but he shews where a fountain of grace is infinitely exceeding that of lust; *the spirit within us lusteth to envy, but he giveth more grace*, ver. 5. And therefore sit not down tamely under this sin, it is not unconquerable. God can give thee more grace than thou

thou hast sin, more humility than thou hast pride. Be but so humble as cordially to beg his grace, and thou shalt not be so proud as wickedly to envy his gifts or grace in others.

Secondly, Make this sin as black and ugly as thou canst possibly to thy thought, that, when it is presented to thee, thou mayest abhor it the more. Indeed there needs no more that its own face (wouldst thou look wishly on it), to make thee out of love with it. For first, This envying of other's gifts casts great contempt upon God, and that more ways than one.

First, When thou enviest the gifts of thy brethren, thou takest upon thee to teach God what he shall give, and to whom; as if the great God should take counsel or ask leave of thee before he dispenseth his gifts, and darest thou stand to thy own envious thoughts with this interpretation? Such a one thou findest himself give, Matt. xx. 15. *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?* as if Christ had said, What hath any to do to cavil at my disposal of what is not theirs, but mine to give?

Secondly, Thou malignest the goodness of God. It troubles thee, it seems, that God hath a heart to do good to any besides thyself; thy eye is evil, because his is good. Wouldst not thou have God be good? you had as good speak out, and say, You would not have him God: he can as soon cease to be God, as to be good.

Thirdly, Thou art an enemy to the glory of God, as thou defacest that which should set it forth. Every gift is a ray of divine excellency; and as all the beams declare the glory of the sun, so all the gifts God imparts, declare the glory of God: now envy labours to deface and sully the representations of God; it hath ever something to disparage the excellency of another withal. God shewed Miriam her sin by her punishment; she went to bespatter Moses, that shone so eminently with the gifts and graces of God, and God spits in her face, Numb. xii., yea, fills her all over with a noisome scab. Dost thou cordially wish well to the honour of God? Why then hangest thou thy head, and dost not rather rejoice to see him glorified by the gifts of others. Could a heathen take it so well, when himself was passed by, and others chosen to places of honour and government, that he said, He was glad his city could find so many more worthy than himself? and shall a Christian repine that any are found fit to honour God besides himself?

Secondly, Thou wrongest thy brother, as thou sinnest against the law of love, which obligeth thee to rejoice in his good as thy own, yea, to prefer him in honour before thyself. Thou canst not love and envy the same person; envy is as contrary to love, as the hectical feverish fire in the body is to the kindly heat of

nature. *Charity envieth not,* 1 Cor. xiii. How can it when it lives where it loves? and when thou ceasest to love, thou beginnest to hate and kill him, and dost not thou tremble to be found a murderer at last?

Thirdly, Thou consultest worst of all for thyself. God is out of thy reach: what thou spittest against heaven, thou art sure to have fall on thy own face at last; and thy brother, whom thou enviest, God stands bound to defend him against thy envy, because he is maligned for what he hath of God in him. Thus did God plead Joseph's cause against his envious brethren, and David's against wicked Saul. Thyself only hast real hurt.

First, Thou deprivest thyself of what thou mightest reap from the gifts of others. That old saying is true, *Tolle invidiam, mea tua sunt & tua mea:* What thou hast is mine, and what I have thine, when envy is gone. Whereas now (like the leech, which they say draws out the worst blood) thou suckest nothing but what swells thy mind with discontent, and is after vomited out in strife and contention. O what a sad thing is it, that one should go from a precious sermon, a sweet prayer, and bring nothing away but a grudge against the instrument God used, as we see in the Pharisees, and others, at Christ's preaching!

Secondly, Thou robbest thyself of the joy of thy life: *He that is cruel, troubles his own flesh,* Prov. xi. 17. The envious man doth it to purpose; he sticks the honour and esteem of others as thorns in his own heart; he cannot think of them without pain and anguish, and he must needs pine that is ever in pain.

Thirdly, Thou throwest thyself into the mouth of temptation: thou needest give the devil no greater advantage; it is a stock any sin almost will grow upon. What will not the patriarchs do to rid their hands of Joseph, whom they envied? that very pride which made them disdain the thought of bowing to his sheaf, made them stoop far lower, even to debase themselves as low as hell, and be the devil's instruments to sell their dear brother into slavery, which might have been worse to him (if God had not provided otherwise) than if they had slain him on the place.—What an impotent and cruel mind did Saul shew against David, when once envy had envenomed his heart! From that day on which he heard David preferred in the women's songs above himself, he could never get that sound out of his head, but did ever devote this innocent man to death in his thoughts, who had done him no other wrong than in being an instrument to keep the crown on his head, by the hazard of his own life with Goliah.—O it is a bloody sin, it is a bloody sin, it is the womb wherein a whole litter of other sins are formed, Rom. i. 29. *Full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c.* and therefore except you

you be resolved to bid the devil welcome, and his whole train, resist him in this, that comes before to take up quarters for the rest.

CHAP. X.

Of Pride of Grace.

SECONDLY, Pride of grace. This is another way satan assaults the Christian. It is true, grace cannot be proud, yet it is possible a saint may be proud of his grace; there is nothing the Christian hath or doth, but this worm of pride will breed in it. The world we live in is corruptible, and all here is subject to putrify, as things kept in a nasty muggish room subject them to mould. It is not the nature of grace, but the salt of the covenant keeps and preserves the purity of it; in heaven indeed we shall be safe. But how can a saint be said to be proud of his grace? Then a soul is proud of his grace, when he trusts in his grace. Trust and confidence is an incommunicable flower of God's crown as Sovereign Lord; even among men it goes along with royalty. Set up a king, and as such he expects you will give him this, as the undoubted prerogative of his place; and therefore to seek protection from any other is (as it were) to set up another king, Judg. xix. 15. *If indeed you anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust under my shadow.*— Therefore, when a soul puts his trust in any thing beside God, he sets up a prince, a king, an idol, to which he gives God's glory away. Now it doth not make the sin less, that it is the grace of God we crown, than if it were a lust we crowned. 'Tis idolatry to worship a holy angel, as well as a cursed devil; to make our grace our God, as well as our belly our God; nay, rather it adds to it, because that is now used to rob him of his glory, which should have brought him in the greatest revenue of glory; certainly the more treasure you put into your servants hands, the greater wrong to you for him to run away with it. I doubt not but David could have borne it better to have seen a Philistine drive him from his throne than a son, an Absalom.— But how can or may a saint be said to trust in his grace?

First, By trusting to the strength of his grace.

Secondly, By trusting on the worth of his grace. Indeed a professed trust in grace, I conceive, cannot stand with grace; but there is an oblique kind of trust, or that which by interpretation may savour of it. Satan is sly in his assaults.

SECT. I.—First, of the first, To trust in the strength of grace

is to be proud of grace. This is opposed to that poverty of spirit so commended by our Saviour, Matt. v. by which a man lives in the continual sense of his spiritual beggary and nothingness, and so hath his recourse to Christ, as the poor to the rich man's door, knowing he hath nothing at home to maintain him. Such a one was Paul, not able to do any thing of himself; he is not ashamed to let the world know that Christ carries his purse for him. *Our sufficiency is of God*; yea, after many years trading, this holy man sees nothing he hath got, Phil. iii. 13. *I count not myself to have apprehended*; he is still pressing forward: Ask him how he lives, he will tell you who keeps house for him; *I live, yet not I*, Gal. ii. 20. as ask a beggar where he hath his meat, clothes, &c. he will say, *I thank my good Master*. Now satan chiefly labours to puff the soul up with an over-weening conceit of its own ability, as the readiest means to bring him into his snare: satan knows 'tis God's method to give his children into his hands, when once they grow proud and self-confident: Hezekiah was left to a temptation, 2 Chr. xxii. 31. *to try him*: Why? God had tried him to purpose a little before in affliction, what needs this? O! Hezekiah's heart was lifted up after his affliction. It was time for God to let the tempter alone a little to foil him: probably now Hezekiah had high thoughts of his grace; O, he would never do as he had done before, and God will let him see what a weak creature he is. Peter makes a whip for his own back in that bravado, *Though all should forsake Thee, yet will not I*. Christ now in mere mercy must set satan on him, to lay him on his back, that, seeing the weakness of his faith, he might be dismounted from the height of his pride. All that I shall say from this, is to intreat thee (Christian) to have a care of this kind of pride. You know what Joab said to David, when he perceived his heart lift up with the strength of his kingdom, and therefore would have the people numbered, *The Lord God add unto thy people, how many soever they be, a hundred fold; but why doth my Lord and King delight in this thing?* 2 Sam. xxiv. 3. The Lord add to the strength of thy grace a hundred fold, but why delightest thou in this? Why shouldst thou be lift up? Is it not grace? Shall the groom be proud because he rides on his master's horse? or the mud wall, because the sun shines on it? Mayest thou not say of every dram of grace, as the young man of his hatchet, *Alas, master, it is borrowed?* Nay, not only borrowed, but thou canst not use it without his skill and strength that lends it thee. O beware of this: let not those vain thoughts lodge in thee, lest thou enter into temptation. It is a breach which a whole troop of sins may enter at, yea will, except speedily filled up.

First, It will make thee soon grow loose and negligent in thy duty. 'Tis sense of insufficiency keeps a soul at work, to pray and hear,

hear, as want in the house and hutch holds up the market; no man comes thither to buy what he hath at home. *Up*, saith Jacob, *go down to Egypt for corn, that we may live and not die.*— Thus saith the needy Christian, Up soul, to thy God, thy faith is weak, thy patience almost spent, ply thee to the throne of grace, go with thy homer to the ordinances, and get some supplies. Now a soul conceited of his store hath another song, *Soul, take thine ease, thou art richly laid up for many days.* Let the doubting soul pray, thy faith is strong; let the weak lie at the breast, thou art well grown up; nay, 'tis well if it goes not further to a despising of ordinances, except they have some more courtly fare than ordinary: such a pass were the Corinthians come to, 1 Cor. iv. 8. *Now ye are full, now ye are rich, ye reign like kings without us.* I pray observe how he lays the accent on the particle *now; now ye are rich*, as if he had said, I knew the time, if Paul had been come to town, and news spread abroad in the city that Paul was to preach, you would have flocked to hear him, and blessed God for the season: but then ye were poor and empty; now ye are full, you have got to a higher attainment: Paul is a plain fellow now, he may carry his cheer to a hungry people if he will, we are well paid. And when once the heart is come to this, 'tis easy to judge what will follow.

Secondly, This trusting to the strength of grace will make the soul bold and venturous. The humble Christian is the wary Christian; he knows his weakness, and this makes him afraid. I have a weak head, saith he, I may be soon disputed into an error and heresy, and therefore I dare not come where such stuff is broached, lest my weak head should be intoxicated: the confident man, he will sip of every cup, he fears none; no, he is stablished in the truth, a whole team of heretics shall not draw him aside. I have a vain light heart, saith the humble soul, I dare not come among wicked debauched company, lest I should at last bring the naughty man home with me: but on trusting to the strength of his grace, dares venture into the devil's quarters. Thus Peter into the rout of Christ's enemies, and how he came off you know; there his faith had been slain on the place, had not Christ sounded a retreat, by the seasonable look of love he gave him. Indeed I have read of some bragging philosophers, who did not think it enough to be temperate, except they had the object for intemperance present; and therefore they would go into taverns and whore-houses, as if they meant to beat the devil on his own ground; but the Christian knows an enemy nearer than so, which they were ignorant of; and that he need not go over his own threshold to challenge the devil. He hath lust in his bosom that will be hard enough for him all his days, without giving it the vantage ground. Christian, I know no sin but thou mayest be

left to commit it, except one. It was a bold speech of him, and yet a good man, (as I have heard), If Clapham die of the plague, say Clapham had no faith: and this made him boldly go among the infected. If a Christian, thou shalt not die of spiritual plagues, yet such may have the plague sores of gross sins running on them for a time, and is not this sad enough? Therefore walk humbly with thy God.

Thirdly, This high conceit of the strength of thy grace will make thee cruel and churlish to thy weak brethren in their infirmities, a sin that least becomes a saint, Gal. vi. 1. *If any one be overtaken, you that be spiritual restore such a one with meekness.* But how shall a soul get such a meek spirit? It follows: *considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.* What makes men hard to the poor? They think they shall never be so themselves. Why are many so sharp in their censures? But because they trust too much to their grace, as if they could never fall. O you are in the body, and the body of sin in you, therefore fear. Bernard used to say, when he heard any scandalous sin of a professor, *Hodie illi, cras mihi.*—He fell to-day, I may stumble to-morrow.

SECT. II.—The second way a soul may be proud of his grace, is by resting on it for his acceptancewith God. The scripture calls inherent grace *our own righteousness* (though God indeed be the efficient of it), and opposeth it to the righteousness of Christ, which alone is called the *righteousness of God*, Rom. x. 1. Now to rest on any grace inherent, is to exalt our own righteousness above the righteousness of God; and what pride will this amount to? If this were so, then a saint, when he comes to heaven, might say, This is heaven which I have built, my grace hath purchased; and thus the God of heaven should become tenant to his creature in heaven. No: God hath cast the order of our salvation into another method of grace, but not of grace in us, but grace to us. Inherent grace hath its place and office to accompany salvation, Heb. vi. 9. but not procure it. This is Christ's work, not the work of grace.—When Israel waited on the Lord at mount Sinai, they had their bounds; not a man must come up besides Moses to treat with God, no, not touch the mount lest they die: thus all the graces of the spirit wait on God, but none come up to challenge any acceptance of God besides faith, which is a grace that presents the soul not in its own garments. But you will say, What needs all this? Where is the man that trusts in his grace! Alas, where is the Christian that doth fully stand clear, and freely come off by his own righteousness? He is a rare pilot indeed that can steer his faith in so direct a course, as not now and then to knock upon his duty, and run aground upon that grace. Abraham went in to Hagar, and the children of Abraham's faith are not perfectly dead

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to the law, and may be found sometimes in Hagar's arms; witness the flux and reflux of our faith, according to the various aspect of our obedience; when this seems full, then our faith is at a spring tide, and covers all the mountains of our fears; but let it seem to wain in any service or duty, then the Jordan of our faith flies back, and leaves the soul naked. The devil's spite is at Christ, and therefore since he could not hinder his landing (which he endeavoured all he could), nor work his will on his person when he was come, he goes now in a more refined way to darken the glory of his sufferings, and the sufficiency of his righteousness, by blending ours with his; thy doctrine of justification by faith hath had more works and batteries made against it, than any other in the scripture. Indeed many other errors were but his sly approaches to get nearer to undermine this; and lastly, when he cannot hide this truth (which now shines in the church like the sun in its strength), then he labours to hinder the practical improvement of it, that we (if he can help it) shall not live up to our own principles, making us, at the same time that in our judgment we profess acceptance only through Christ, in our practice confute ourselves. Now there is a double pride in the soul he makes use of for this end; the one I may call a mannerly pride, the other a self-applauding pride.

I. A mannerly pride, which comes forth in the habit and guise of humility, and that discovers itself, either at the soul's first coming to Christ, and keeps him from closing with the promise, or afterwards in the daily course of a Christian's walking with God, which keeps him from comfortable living on Christ.

First, When a poor soul is staved off the promise by the sense of his own unworthiness and great unrighteousness; tell him of a pardon, alas! he is so wrapt up with the thoughts of his own vileness, that you cannot fasten it upon him. What, will God ever take such a toad as he is into his bosom, discount so many great abominations at once, and receive him into his favour, that hath been so long in rebellious arms against him? he cannot believe it, no, though he hears what Christ hath done and suffered for sin, he refuseth to be comforted. Little doth the soul think what a bitter root such thoughts spring from; thou thinkest thou dost well, thus to declaim against thyself, and aggravate thy sins; indeed thou canst not paint them black enough, or entertain too low and base thoughts of thyself for them: But what wrong hath God and Christ done thee, that thou shouldst so unworthily reflect upon the mercy of the one, and merit of the other? Mayest thou not do this, and be tender of the good name of God also? Is there no way to shew thy sense of thy sin, except thou asperse thy Saviour? Canst thou not charge thyself, but thou must condemn God, and put Christ and his blood to shame before satan,

who triumphs more in this than all thy other sins? In a word, though thou like a wretch hast undone thyself, and damned thy soul by thy sins, yet art thou not willing God should have the glory of pardoning them, and Christ the honour of procuring the same? Or art thou like him in the gospel, Luke xvi. 3. *who could not dig, and to beg was ashamed.* Thou canst not earn heaven by thine own righteousness, and is thy spirit so stout that thou wilt not beg it for Christ's sake, yea, take it at God's hands, who in the gospel comes a begging to thee, and beseecheth thee to be reconciled to him? Ah, soul! who would ever have thought there could have lain such pride under such a modest veil? And yet none like it. 'Tis horrible pride for a beggar to starve, rather than to take an alms at a rich man's hands; a malefactor, rather to chuse his halter, than a pardon from his gracious prince's hand; but here is one infinitely surpassing both; a soul pining and perishing in sin, and yet rejecting the mercy of God, and the helping hand of Christ to save him. Though Abigail did not think herself worthy to be David's wife, yet she thought David was worthy of her, and therefore she humbly accepted his offer, and makes haste to go with the messengers: That is the sweet frame of heart indeed, to lie low in the sense of your own vileness, yet to believe; and renounce all conceit of worthiness in ourselves, yet not therefore to renounce all hope of mercy, but the more speedily to make haste to Christ that wooes us. All the pride and unmannerliness ly in making Christ stay for us, who bids his messengers invite poor sinners to come, and tell them, *all things are ready.* But may be thou wilt say still, It is not pride that keeps thee off, but thou canst not believe that God will ever entertain such as thou art. Truly, thou mendest the matter but little with this: either thou keepest some lust in thy heart, which thou wilt not part with to obtain the benefit of the promise, and then thou art a notorious hypocrite, who under such an outcry for thy sins, canst drive a secret trade with hell at the same time; or if not so, thou dost discover the more pride in that thou darest stand out, when thou hast nothing to oppose against the many plain and clear promises of the gospel, but thy peremptory unbelief. God bids the wicked forsake his ways, and turn to him, and he will abundantly pardon him; but thou sayest, thou canst not believe this for thy own self. Now who speaks the truth? One of you two must be the liar: either thou must take it with shame to thyself, for what thou said against God and his promise (and that is thy best course), or thou must proudly, yea, blasphemously cast it upon God, as every unbeliever doth, 1 John v. 10. Nay, thou makest him forsworn; for God (to give poor sinners the greater security in flying for refuge to Christ, who is the *hope set* before them, Heb. vi. 17, 18.) hath sworn

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should have strong consolation. O happy we, for whose sake God puts himself under an oath; but O miserable we, who will not believe God, no, not when he swears.

Secondly, When the soul hath shot the great gulph, and got into a state of peace and life by closing with Christ, yet this mannerly pride satan makes use of, in the Christian's daily course of duty and obedience, to disturb him, and hinder his peace and comfort. O how uncheerfully, yea, joylessly, do many precious souls pass their days! If you enquire what is the cause, you shall find all their joy runs out at the crannies of their imperfect duties, and weak graces; they cannot pray as they would, and walk as they desire, with evenness and constancy; they see how short they fall of the holy rule in the word, and the pattern which others more eminent in grace do set before them; and this, though it doth not make them throw the promises away, and quite renounce all hope of Christ, yet it begets many sad fears and suspicions, yea, makes them sit at the feast Christ hath provided, and not know whether they may eat or not. In a word, as it robs them of their joy, so Christ of that glory which he should receive from their rejoicing in him. I do not say, Christian, thou oughtest not to mourn for these defects thou findest in thy graces and duties; nay, thou couldst not approve thyself to be sincere, if thou didst not. A gracious heart, seeing how far short his renewed state (for the present) falls of man's primitive holiness by creation, cannot but weep and mourn, as the Jews, to behold the second temple; yet, Christian, even while the tears are in thy eyes for thy imperfect graces (for a soul riseth with his grave-clothes on), thou shouldst rejoice, yea, triumph over all these thy defects by faith in Christ, *in whom thou art complete*, Col. i. 10, while imperfect in thyself. Christ's presence in the second temple (which the first had not) made it, though comparatively mean, more glorious than the first, Hag. ii. 9. How much more doth his presence in this spiritual temple of a gracious heart, imputing his righteousness to cover all its uncomeliness, make the soul glorious above man at first? This is a garment, for which, as Christ saith of the lilly, we neither spin nor toil; yet Adam, in all his created royalty, was not so clad as the weakest believer is with this on his soul. Now, Christian, consider well what thou dost, while thou sittest languishing under the sense of thy own weaknesses, and refusest to rejoice in Christ, and live comfortably on the sweet privileges thou art interested in by thy marriage to him. Dost thou not bewray some of this spiritual pride working in thee? O! if thou couldst pray without wandering, walk without limping, believe without wavering, then thou couldst rejoice and walk cheerfully. It seems, soul, thou stayest to bring the ground of thy comfort with thee, and not

not to receive it purely from Christ: O, how much better were it if thou wouldst say, with David, *Though my house* (my heart) *be not so with God, yet he hath made with me a covenant ordered in all things and sure;* and this is all my desire, all my confidence: Christ I oppose to all my sins, Christ to all my wants; he is my all in all, and all above all. Indeed all those complaints of our wants and weaknesses, so far as they withdraw our hearts from relying cheerfully on Christ, they are but the language of pride hankering after the covenant of works. O, 'tis hard to forget our mother-tongue, which is so natural to us; labour therefore to be sensible of it, how grievous it is to the spirit of Christ. What would a husband say, if his wife, instead of expressing her love to him, and delight in him, should, day and night, do nothing but weep and cry to think of her former husband that is dead? The law (as a covenant) and Christ are compared to two husbands, Rom. vii. 3. *Ye are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead.* Now thy sorrow for the defect of thy own righteousness, when it hinders thy rejoicing in Christ, is but a whining after thy other husband: And this Christ cannot but take unkindly; that thou art not as well pleased to lie in the bosom of Christ, and have thy happiness from him, as with your old husband the law.

II. A self-applauding pride, when the heart is secretly lifted up, so as to promise itself acceptation at God's hand, for any duty or act of obedience it performs, and doth not, when most assisted, go out of his own actings, to lay the weight of his expectation entirely upon Christ; every such glance of the soul's eye is adulterous, yea, idolatrous. If thy heart, Christian, at any time be secrety enticed (as Job saith of another kind of idolatry), or thy mouth doth kiss thy hand; that is, dote so far on thy own duties or righteousness, as to give them this inward worship of thy confidence and trust, this is a great iniquity indeed: For, in this thou deniest the God that is above, who hath determined thy faith to another object. Thou comest to open heaven-gate with the old key, when God hath set on a new lock. Dost thou not acknowledge that thy first entrance into thy justified state was of pure mercy? Thou wast *justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*, Rom. vii. 24. And whom art thou beholden to, now thou art reconciled, for thy further acceptance in every duty or holy action? to thy duty, thy obedience, thyself, or Christ? The same apostle will tell you, Rom. v. 2. *By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.* If Christ should not lead thee in, and all thou doest, thou art sure to find the door shut upon thee; there is no more place for desert now thou art gracious, than when

when thou wast graceless, Rom. i. 17. *The righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, for the just shall live by faith.*— We are not only made alive by Christ, but we live by Christ: Faith sucks in continual pardoning, assisting, comforting mercy from him, as the lungs suck in the air. Heaven-way is paved with grace and mercy to the end.

Use. Be exhorted, above all, to watch against this plea of satan; beware thou restest not in thy own righteousness: Thou standest under a tottering wall; the very cracks thou seest in thy graces and duties when best, bid thee stand off, except thou wouldst have them fall on thy head; the greatest step to heaven, is out of our own doors, over our own threshold. It hath cost many a man his life when his house was on fire, a greediness to save some of the stuff, which venturing among the flames to preserve, they have perished themselves; more have lost their souls by thinking to carry some of their own stuff with them to heaven: Such a good work or duty, while they, like lingering Lot, have been loth to leave in point of confidence, have themselves perished. O, sirs, come out, come out, leave what is your own in the fire, fly to Christ naked, he hath clothing for you better than your own: Poor to Christ, and he hath gold not like thine, which will consume and be found drossy in the fire, but such as hath in the fiery trial passed in God's righteous judgment for pure and full weight. You cannot be found in two places at once: choose whether you will be found in your own righteousness or in Christ's. Those who have had more to shew than thyself, have thrown away all, and gone a begging to Christ. Read Paul's inventory, Phil. iii. what he had, what he did, yet all dross and loss: Give him Christ, and take the rest who will. So Job, as holy a man as trod on earth, (God himself being witness,) yet saith, *Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul, I would despise my life*, Job ix. 21. He had acknowledged his imperfections before; now he makes a supposition (indeed *quod non est supponendum*): If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul: I would not entertain any such thoughts as should puff me up into such a confidence of my holiness, as to make it my plea with God. Like to our common phrase, we say, Such a one hath excellent parts; but he knows it, that is, he is proud of it. Take heed of knowing thy own grace in this sense: Thou canst not give a greater wound both to thy grace and comfort, than by thus priding thyself in it.

SECT. III.—First, Thy grace cannot thrive so long as thou thus restest on it. A legal spirit is no friend to grace; nay, a bitter enemy against it, as appeared by the Pharisees in Christ's time. Grace comes not by the law, but by Christ; thou mayest stand long enough by it, before thou gettest any life of grace into thy

thy soul, or further life into thy grace. If thou wouldst have this, thou must set thyself under Christ's wings by faith; from his spirit in the gospel alone comes this kindly natural heat to hatch thy soul to the life of holiness, and increase what thou hast; and thou canst not come under Christ's wings, till thou comest from under the shadow of the other, by renouncing all expectation from thy own works and services. You know Reuben's curse, that he should not excel, because he went up into his father's bed; when other tribes increased, he stood at a little number. By trusting in thy own works, thou dost worse by Christ; and shalt thou excel in grace? Perhaps some of you have been long professors, and yet come to little growth in love to God, humility, heavenly-mindedness, mortification: And 'tis worth the digging to see what lies at the root of your profession, whether there be not a legal principle that hath too much acted you.—Have you not thought to carry all with God from your duties and services, and too much laid up your hopes in your own actings? Alas, this is as so much dead earth, which must be thrown out, and gospel principles laid in the room thereof: Try but this course, and see whether the spring of thy grace will not come on apace. David gives an account how he came to stand and flourish, when some, that were rich and mighty, on a sudden withered and came to nothing. *Lo*, (saith he) *this is the man that made not God his strength, but trusted in the abundance of his riches. But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever*, Psal. lii. 7, 8. While others trust in the riches of their own righteousness and services, and make not Christ their strength, do thou renounce all, and trust in the mercy of God in Christ, and thou shalt be like a green olive, when they fade and wither.

Secondly, Christian, you will not thrive in true comfort, so long as you rest in any inherent work of grace, and do not stand clear of your own actings and righteousness. Gospel comfort springs from a gospel root, which is Christ, Phil. iii. 3. *We are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.* Now, a soul that rests on any holiness in himself, he grafts his comfort upon himself, not Christ; he sucks his own breast, not Christ's, and so makes Christ a dry nurse: and what comfort can grow on that dry tree? The spirit is our comforter, as well as our teacher and counsellor. Now, as the spirit, when he teacheth, comes not with any new or strange truth, but takes of Christ's own (what he finds in the word), so where he comforts, he takes of Christ's own, his righteousness, not our own: Christ is the matter and ground of his comfort; all cordials are but Christ distilled, and made up in several promises; his acting, not ours: he doth not

say,

say, Soul, rejoice, thou art holy; but, Soul, triumph, Christ is righteous, and is *the Lord of thy righteousness:* Not, Soul, thou prayest sweetly, fear not; but, Thou hast an Advocate with the Father, Christ the righteous. So that the first step to the receiving of comfort from the Spirit, is to send away all comforters of our own. As in learning of the Spirit, he that will be taught by him, must first become a fool, that is, no way lean to his own understanding; so he that would be comforted, must first be emptied of all self-supports, must not lean to his own comforts.—As a physician first bids his patient cast off all others he hath tampered with; he asks what physic he hath had from them, takes off their plasters, and throws away their physic, and goes about the work anew: so the spirit, when he comes to comfort a poor soul, first persuades the soul to send away all its own physicians: Oh, saith the soul, I have been in the hand of such a duty, such a course of obedience, and have thought sure now I shall be well, and have comfort now I do this duty, set upon such a holy course. Well, saith the Spirit, if you will have me do any thing, these must all be dismissed in point of confidence.—Now, and not till now, is the soul a subject fit to receive the Spirit's comforts. And therefore, friends, as you love your inward peace, beware what vessel you draw your comfort from.—Grace is finite, and so cannot afford much: 'tis leaking, and so cannot hold long; thou drinkest in a riven dish, that hast thy comfort from thy grace. 'Tis mixed, and so weak; and weak grace cannot give strong consolation; and such thou needest, especially in strong conflicts. Nay, lastly, thy comfort which thou drawest from it is stolen, thou dost not come honestly by it; and stolen comforts will not thrive with thee. O! what folly is it for the child to play the thief for that which he may freely and more fully have from his father, who giveth and reproacheth not! That comfort which thou wouldst filch out of thy own righteousness and duties, behold it is laid up for thee in Christ, from whose fulness thou mayest carry as much as thy faith can hold, and none to check thee: yea, the more thou improvest Christ for thy comfort, the more heartily welcome; we are bid to *open our mouth wide, and he will fill it.*

CHAP. XI.

The Third Kind of Spiritual Pride, viz. *Pride of Privileges.*

THE third kind of pride (spiritual pride I mean) is pride of privileges; with which these wicked spirits labour to blow up the Christian. To name three:

First,

First, When God calls a person to some eminent place, or useth him to do some special piece of service.

Secondly, When God honours a saint to suffer for his truth or cause.

Thirdly, When God flows in with more than ordinary manifestations of his love, and fills the soul with joy and comfort.—These are privileges not equally dispensed to all; and therefore, where they are, satan takes the advantage of assaulting such with pride.

SECT. I.—First, When God calls a person to some eminent place, or useth him to do some special piece of service. Indeed it requires a great measure of grace to keep the heart low, when the man stands high. The apostle, speaking how a minister of the gospel should be qualified, 1 Tim. iii. 6. saith, he must not be a *novice*, or a young convert, *lest he should be lift up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* As if he had said, This calling is honourable; if he be not well ballasted with humility, a little gust from satan will toss him into this sin. The seventy that Christ first sent out to preach the gospel, and prevailed so miraculously over satan; even these, while they trod on the serpent's head, he turned again, and had like to have stung them with pride; which our Saviour perceived, when they returned in triumph, and told what great miracles they had wrought; and therefore he takes them off that glorying, lest it should degenerate into vain glory, and bids them *not rejoice that devils were subject to them, but rather that their names were written in heaven.* As if he had said, It is not the honour of your calling, and success of your ministry will save you; there shall be some cast to the devils, who shall then say, *Lord, Lord, in thy name we have cast out devils!* And therefore value not yourselves by that; but rather evidence to your souls that ye are of mine elect ones, which shall stand you more in stead at the great day than all this.

SECT. II.—A second privilege is, when God honours a person to suffer for his truth; this is a great privilege. *Unto you it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his sake.* God doth not use to give worthless gifts to his saints; there is some preciousness in it, which a carnal eye cannot see. Faith, you will say, is a great gift, but perseverance greater; without which, faith would be little worth; and perseverance in suffering, this above both is honourable. This made John Careless, our English martyr, (who, though he died not at the stake, yet in prison for Christ,) say, Such an hour it is as angels are not permitted to have, therefore God forgive me mine unthankfulness. Now, when satan cannot scare a soul from prison, yet then he will labour to puff him up in prison; when he cannot make him pity himself,

himself, then he will flatter him till he prides in himself. Affliction from God exposeth to impatience; for God, to pride. And therefore, Christians, labour to fortify yourselves against this temptation of satan: How soon you may be called to suffering work, you know not; such clouds oft are not long arising. Now to keep thy heart humble when thou art honoured to suffer for the truth, consider,

First, Though thou dost not deserve those sufferings at man's hand (thou canst and mayest in that regard glory in thy innocency, thou sufferest not as an evil doer), yet thou canst not but confess it is a just affliction from God, in regard of sin in thee; and this methinks should keep thee humble. The same suffering may be martyrdom in regard of man, and yet a fatherly chastising for sin in regard of God. None suffered without sin, but Christ; and therefore none may glory in them, but he; Christ in his own, we in his: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ,* Gal. v. This kept Mr Bradford humble in his sufferings for the truth: none more rejoiced in them, and blessed God for them, yet none more humble under them than he. And what kept him thus humble? Read his godly letters, and you shall find almost in all how he bemoans his sins, and the sins of the Protestants under the reign of king Edward: *It was time* (saith he) *for God to put his rod into the Papists' hands; we were grown so proud, formal, unfruitful, yea, to loath and despise the means of grace, when we enjoyed the liberty thereof; and therefore God hath brought the wheel of persecution on us.* As he looked at the honour, to make him thankful; so to sin, to keep him humble.

Secondly, Consider who bears thee up, and carries thee through thy sufferings for Christ. Is it thy grace, or his, that is sufficient for such a work? Thy spirit, or Christ's, by which thou speakest, when called to bear witness to the truth? How comes it to pass thou art a sufferer, and not a persecutor; a confessor, and not a denier; yea, a betrayer of Christ and his gospel? This thou owest to God; he is not beholden to thee, that thou wouldst part with estate, credit, or life itself for his sake: if thou hadst a thousand lives; thou wouldst owe them all to him. But thou art beholden to God exceedingly, that he will call for these in this way; which has such an honour and reward attending it: he might have suffered thee to live in thy lusts, and at last to suffer the loss of all these for them. Oh, how many die at the gallows as martyrs in the devil's cause, for felonies, rapes, and murders! Or he might withdraw his grace, and leave thee to thy own cowardice and unbelief, and then thou wouldst soon shew thyself in thy colours. The stoutest champions for Christ have been taught how weak they are, if Christ steps aside. Some that have

have given great testimony of their faith and resolution in Christ's cause, even to come so near dying for his name, as to give themselves to be bound to the stake, and fire to be kindled upon them, yet then their hearts have failed: as that holy man, Mr Benbridge, in our English Martyrology, who thrust the faggots from him, and cried out, *I recant! I recant!* Yet this man, when reinforced in his faith, and endued with power from above, was able within the space of a week after that sad foil, to die at the stake cheerfully: *Qui pro nobis mortem semel vicit, semper in nobis vincit*—He that once overcame death for us, is he that always overcomes death in us. And who should be thy song, but he that is thy strength? Applaud not thyself, but bless him.—It is one of God's names, he is called the *glory of his people's strength*, Psal. lxxxix. 17. The more thou gloriest in God that gives thee strength to suffer for him, the less thou wilt boast of thyself: a thankful heart and a proud cannot dwell together in one bosom.

Thirdly, Consider what a foul blot pride gives to all thy sufferings, where it is not bewailed and resisted; it alters the case. The old saying is, that 'tis not the punishment, but the cause makes the martyr: We may safely say further, it is not barely the cause, but the sincere frame of the heart in suffering for a good cause, that makes a man a martyr in God's sight. Though thou shouldst give thy body to be burnt, if thou hast not an humble heart of a sufferer for Christ, thou turnest merchant for thyself. Thou deniest but one self, to set up another; runnest the hazard of thy estate and life to gain some applause (may be), and rear up a monument to thy honour in the opinions of men; thou dost no more in this case than a soldier, who, for name of valour, will venture into the mouth of death and danger; only thou shewest thy pride under a religious disguise; but that helps it not, but makes it the worse. If thou wilt in thy sufferings be a sacrifice acceptable to God, thou must not only be ready to offer up thy life for his truth, but sacrifice thy pride also, or else thou mayest tumble out of one fire into another; suffer here from man, as a seeming champion for the gospel, and in another world from God, for robbing him of his glory in thy sufferings.

SECT. III.—A third privilege is, When God flows in with more than ordinary manifestations of his love; then the Christian is in danger of having his heart secretly lift up in pride. Indeed the genuine and natural effect, which such discoveries of divine love have on a gracious soul, is to humble it. The sight of mercy increaseth the sense of sin, and that sense dissolves the soul kindly into sorrow, as we see in Magdalen. The heart which possibly was hard and frozen in the shade, will give and thaw in the sun-shine of love, and so long all pride is hid from the creature's eye.

eye. *Then* (saith God, Ezek. xxxvi. 31.) *ye shall remember your ways and your doings, that were not good, and shall loath yourselves in your own sight*, &c. And when shall this be, but when God would save them from all their uncleanness? as appears, ver. 25: yet notwithstanding this, there remain such dregs of corruption unpurged out of the best, that satan finds it not impossible to make the manifestations of God's love an occasion of pride to the Christian; and truly God lets us see our proneness to this sin in the short stay he makes, when he comes with any greater discoveries of his love. The Comforter, 'tis true, abides for ever in the saint's bosom; but his joys, they come, and are gone again quickly. They are as exceedings, with which he feasts the believer, but the cloth is soon drawn; and why so? but because we cannot bear them for our every-day food. A short interview of heaven, and a vision of love now and then upon the mount of an ordinance or affliction, cheer the spirits of drooping Christians, who, might they have leave to build tabernacles there, and dwell under a constant shine of such manifestations, would be prone to forget themselves, and think they were lords of their own comforts. If holy Paul was in danger of falling into this distemper of pride from his short rapture (to prevent which, God saw it needful to let him blood with a thorn in the flesh), would not our blood much more grow too rank, and we too crank and wanton, if we should feed long on such luscious food? And therefore, if ever, Christian, thou hadst need to watch, then is the time when comforts abound, and God dandles thee most on the knee of his love, when his face shines with clearest manifestations, lest this sin of pride (as a thief in the candle) should waste away thy joy. To prevent which, thou shouldst do well, first, to look that thou measurest not thy grace by thy comfort, lest so thou beest led into a false opinion that thy grace is strong, because thy comforts are so. Satan will be ready to help forward such thoughts as a fit *medium* to lift thee up, and slacken thy care in duty for the future. Such discoveries do indeed bear witness to the truth of thy grace, but not to the degree and measure of it: The weak child, may be, yea, is oftener in the lap than the strong. Secondly, do not so much applaud thyself in thy present comfort, as labour to improve it for the glory of God. *Up, and eat* (saith the angel to the prophet), *because the journey is too great for thee.* The manifestations of God's love are to fit us for our work. It is one thing to rejoice in the light of our comfort, and another to go forth in the power of the spirit comforting us (as giants refreshed with this wine) to run our race of duty and obedience with more strength and alacrity. He shews his pride that spends his time in telling his money merely to see how rich he is; but he his wisdom that lays out his money, and

trades with it. The boaster of his comforts will lose what he hath, when he that improves his comforts in a fuller trade of duty, shall add more to what he hath. Thirdly, Remember thou dependest on God for the continuance of thy comfort. They are not the smiles thou hadst yesterday can make thee joyous to-day, any more than the bread thou didst then eat can make thee strong without more; thou needest new discoveries for new comforts: Let God hide his face, and thou wilt soon lose the sight, and forget the taste of what thou even now hadst. It is beyond our skill or power to preserve those impressions of joy, and comfortable apprehensions of God's favour on our spirit, which sometimes we find; as God's presence brings those, so when he goes he carries them away with him, as the setting sun doth the day. We would laugh heartily at him, who, when the sun shines in at his window, should think by shutting that, to imprison the sunbeams in his chamber; and dost thou not shew as much folly, who thinkest, because thou now hast comfort, thou therefore shalt never be in darkness of spirit more? The believer's comfort is like Israel's manna; it is not like our ordinary bread and provision we buy at market, and lock up in our cup-boards, where we can go to it when we will; no, it is rained as that was from heaven. Indeed God provided for them after this sort, to humble them, Deut. viii. 16. *Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee.* It was not such mean food because that God is said to humble them, for it was delicious food, therefore called *angels' food*, Psal. lxxviii. 25. (such as, if angels did eat, might serve them); but the manner of the dispensing it, from hand to mouth, every day their portion and no more, so that God kept the key of their cupboard, they stood to his immediate allowance: and thus God communicates our spiritual comforts for the same end to humble us. So much for this second sort of spiritual wickedness.

I had thought to have instanced in some other, as hypocrisy, unbelief, morality; but possibly the subject being general, what I have already said may be thought but a digression, and that too long.

I shall therefore conclude this branch of *Spiritual Wickedness*, in a word to those who are yet in a natural and unsanctified state, which is to stir them up, from what I have said concerning satan's assaulting believers with such temptations, to consider seriously, how that satan's chief design against them also lies in the same sins. These are the wickednesses he labours to ingulph you in above all others. If ever you perish, it will be by the hand of these sins. It is your seared conscience, blind mind, and indolent impenitent heart, will be your undoing, if you miscarry finally. Other sins, the devil knows, are preparatory to these, and

and therefore he draws thee into them to bring thee into these. Two ways they prepare a way to spiritual sins. First, as they naturally dispose the sinner to them; it is the nature of sin to blind the mind, stupify the conscience, and harden the heart, as is implied, Heb. iii. 13. *Lest your heart be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* As the feet of the travellers beat the highway hard, so does walking in carnal gross sins the heart; they benumb the conscience, so that in time the sinner loses his feeling, and can carry his lusts in his heart, as Bedlams their pins in the very flesh without pain or remorse. Secondly, as they do provoke God by a judiciary act to give them up to these sins, Lam. iii. 65. *Give them obstinacy of heart* (so it is in the margin), *thy curse unto them.* And when the devil hath got sinners at this pass, then he hath them under lock and key. They are the forerunners of damnation; if God leave thy heart hard and unbroken up, it is a sad sign he means not to sow the seed of grace there. O sinners, pray (as he did request Peter for him) that none of these things may come upon you; which that they may not, take heed thou rejectest not the offers he makes to soften thee. God's hardening is a consequent of, and a punishment for our hardening our hearts. It is most true what Prosper saith: A man may lose temporals against his will, but not spirituals; God will harden none, damn none, against their will.

CHAP. XII.

Sheweth what the Prize is which Believers wrestle against these Principalities, Powers, and Spiritual Wickednesses, for.

In High Places.

SECT. I.—THESE words contain the last branch in the description of our grand enemy, which have in them some ambiguity, the adjective being only exprest in the original; *en tois epouraniois,* that is, in heavenlies; the phrase being defective, our translators read it *in high or heavenly places,* as if the apostle intended to set out the advantage of place which this our enemy, by being above us, hath of us. Indeed this way most interpreters go; yet some both ancient and modern read the words, not, In heavenly places, but *in heavenly things. En tois enpouraniois* (saith Oecumenius) is as much as if the apostle had said, *Emin pale ou peri mikron tinon, alla uper ton en tois epouraniois pragmaton*—We wrestle not for small and trivial things, but for heavenly, yea, for heaven itself, and our adoption

as he goes on. The same way Chrysostom carries it, *in cœlestibus, id est, pro cœlestibus Dei.* And after him Musculus, and other modern writers. The reasons which are given for this interpretation are weighty.

First, The word elsewhere indefinitely set down, is taken for things, not places, Heb. viii. 5. Nay, one observes this word to be used almost twenty times in the New Testament, and never for any ærial place, but always for things truly heavenly and spiritual; the word indeed properly signifies *super-cœlestial*, and, if applied to places, would signify that where the devil never came since his fall.

Lastly, There seems no great argument to render satan formidable by his being above us in place; it is some advantage indeed to men to gain the hill, or be above their enemy in some place of strength, but none at all to spirits; but now take it of things, and then it adds weight to all the other branches of the description. We wrestle with principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness, and against all these, not for such toys and trifles as the earth affords, which are inconsiderable whether to keep or lose, but for such as heaven holds forth: such an enemy, and such a prize, make it matter of our greatest care how to manage the combat. The word thus opened, the note will be this:

SECT. II.—*Doct.* The chief prize for which we wrestle against satan is heavenly. Or thus, satan's main design is to spoil and plunder the Christian of all that is heavenly. Indeed all the Christian hath, or desires, as a Christian, is heavenly; the world is extrinsical, both to his being and happiness; it is a stranger to the Christian, and intermeddles not with his joy nor grief. Heap all the riches and honours of the world upon a man, they will not make him a Christian; heap them upon a Christian, they will not make him a better Christian. Again, take them all away, let every bird have his feather, when stript and naked he will still be a Christian, and may be a better Christian. It was a notable speech of Erasmus, if spoken in earnest, and his wit were not too quick for his conscience: He desired wealth and honour no more than a feeble horse doth a heavy cloak-bag. And I think every Christian in his right temper would be of his mind. Satan would do the saint little hurt, if he did bend his forces only or chiefly against his outward enjoyments; alas, the Christian doth not value them, or himself by them; this were as if one should think to hurt a man by beating of his clothes when he hath put them off. So far as the spirit of grace prevails in the heart of a saint, he hath put off the world in the desire of it, and enjoyment of it, so that these blows are not much felt; and therefore they are his heavenly treasures which are the booty satan waits for.

SECT.

SECT. III.—First, The Christian's nature is heavenly, born from above; as Christ is the Lord from heaven, so all his offspring are heavenly and holy: now satan's design is to debase and deflower this; it is the precious life of this new creature that he haunts for; he hath lost that beauty of holiness which once shone so gloriously on his angelical nature; and now, like a true apostate, he endeavours to ruin that in the Christian, which he hath lost himself. The seeds of this war are sown in the Christian's nature. You are holy; that he cannot endure. *Miles feri faciem,* was Cæsar's speech, when to fight with the Roman citizens, he bid his soldiers strike at their face: These citizens (said he) love their beauty, mar that, and mar all. The soul is the face whereon God's image is stamped: holiness is the beauty of this face, which makes us indeed like God; this satan knows God loves, and the saint is chary of; and therefore he labours to wound and disfigure this, that he may at once glory in the Christian's shame, and pour contempt upon God in breaking his image; and is it not worth engaging limb and life in battle against this enemy, who would rob us of that which makes us like God himself? Have you forgot the bloody articles of peace that Nahash offered to the men of Jabesh-Gilead? No peace to be had, except they would let him thrust out their right eyes, and lay it for a reproach upon all Israel; which, how it was entertained, read 1 Sam. xi. 6. The face is not so deformed that hath lost its eye, as the soul is that loseth its holiness; and no peace to be expected at satan's hands, except he deprive us of this; methinks, at the thought of this, the spirit of the Lord should come upon the Christian, and his anger should be kindled much more against this cursed spirit, than Saul's and the men of Israel was against Nahash.

Secondly, The Christian's trade is heavenly; the merchandize he deals for is of the growth of that heavenly country, Phil. iii. 20. *Our conversation is in heaven.* Every man's conversation is suitable to his calling; he whose trade is heavenly, follows that close. *Every man follows his own business,* the apostle tells us. You may possibly find a tradesman out of his shop now and then; but he is as a fish out of the water, never in his element till he be in his calling again. Thus when the Christian is about the world, and the worldling about heavenly matters, both are men out of their way, not right girt till they get into their employment again. Now this heavenly trade is that which satan in an especial manner labours to stop. Could the Christian enjoy but a free trade with heaven a few years without molestation, he would soon grow a rich man, too rich indeed for earth; but what with losses sustained by the hands of this pirate satan, and also the wrong he receives by the treachery of some

in his own bosom (that, like unfaithful servants, hold correspondence with this robber), he is kept but low in this life, and much of his gains are lost. Now the Christian's heavenly trade lies either within doors or abroad: he can be free in neither; satan is at his heels in both.

First, Within doors. This I may call his home-trade, which is spent in secret between God and his own soul; here the Christian drives an unknown trade; he is at heaven and home again, richly laden in his thoughts with heavenly meditations, before the world knows where he hath been. Every creature he sees is a text for his heart to raise some spiritual matters and observations from: every sermon he hears cuts him out work to make up and enlarge upon when he is alone. Every providence is as wind to his sails, and sets his heart a-moving in some heavenly affection or other, suitable to the occasion. One while he is wrapped up with joy in the consideration of mercy, another while melted into godly sorrow from the sense of his sins; sometimes exalting God in his praises, anon abasing himself before God for his own vileness. One while he is at the breast of the covenant, milking out the consolations of the promises; another while working his heart into an holy awe and fear of the threatenings. Thus the Christian walks aloft, while the base worldling is licking the dust below. One of these heavenly pearls which the Christian trades for, is more worth than what the worldling gets with all his sweat and travel in his whole life. The Christian's feet stand where other men's heads are: he treads on the moon, and is clothed with the sun: he looks down on earthly men (as one from an high hill doth upon those that live in some fen or moor), and sees them buried in a fog of carnal pleasures and profits, while he breathes in a pure heavenly air, but yet not so high as to be free from all storms and tempests; many a sad gust he hath from sin and satan without! What else mean those sad complaints and groans which come from the children of God, that their hearts are so dead and so dull, their hearts so roving and unfixed in duty, many times so wicked and filthy, that they dare hardly tell what they are, for fear of staining their own lips, and offending the ears of others by naming them! Surely the Christian finds it in his heart to will and desire he could meditate, pray, hear, and live after another sort than this, doth he not? Yes, I durst be his surety he doth. But so long as there is a devil tempts, and we continue within his walk, it will be thus more or less: as fast as we labour to clear the spring of our hearts, he will be labouring to muddle or stop it again: so that we have two works to do at once, to perform a duty, and watch him that opposeth us; trowel and sword both in our hands. They must work hard indeed, who

who have others continually endeavouring to pull down, as they are labouring to rear up the building.

Secondly, That part of the Christian's trade which lies abroad, is heavenly also. Take a Christian in his relations, calling, neighbourhood, he is a heavenly trader in all: the great business of his life is to be doing or receiving some good: that company is not for him, which will neither give nor take this. What should a merchant do where there is no buying nor selling? Every one labours (as his calling is) to seat himself where business is thickest, and he is likely to have the most takings. The Christian (where he may choose) takes such in relations near to himself (husband, wife, servants) as may suit with his heavenly trade, and not such as will be a pull-back to him: he falls in with the holiest persons, as his dearest acquaintance: if there be a saint in the town where he lives, he will find him out, and this shall be the man he will consort with; and in his conversation with these and all else, his chief work is for heaven; his heavenly principle within inclines him to it. Now this alarms hell: What, not contented to go to heaven himself, but by his holy example, gracious speeches, sweet counsels, seasonable reproofs, will be trading with others, and labour to carry them along with him also? This brings the lion fell and mad out of his den: such, to be sure, shall find the devil in their way to oppose them. *I would have come* (saith Paul), *but satan hindered me.* He that will avouch God, and let it appear by the tenor of his conversation that he trades for him, shall have enemies enough, if the devil can help him to such.

Thirdly, The Christian's hopes are all heavenly; he longs not after any thing the world hath to give him. Indeed he would think himself the most miserable man of all others, if here were all he could make of his religion. No, it is heaven and eternal life which he expects; and though he be so poor as not to be able to make a will of a groat, yet he counts himself a greater heir, than if he were child to the greatest prince on earth. This inheritance he sees by faith, and can rejoice in the hope of the glory which it will bring him. The masquery and cheating glory of the great ones of this world, move him not to envy their fancied pomp; but when on the dunghill himself, he can forget his own present sorrows to pity them in all their bravery, knowing that within a few days the cross will be off his back, and the crowns off their heads together; their portion will be spent when he shall come to receive all his. These things entertain him with such joy, that they will not suffer him to acknowledge himself miserable, when others think him, and the devil tells him he is such. This, this torments the very soul of the devil, to see the Christian under sail for heaven, filled with the sweet hope of his joyful entertainment when he comes there; and therefore he

raiseth what storms and tempests he can, either to hinder his arrival in that blessed port (which he most desires, and doth not wholly despair of), or at least to make it a troublesome winter-voyage, such as Paul's was, in which they suffered so much loss. And this indeed very often he obtains in such a degree, that by his violent impetuous temptations beating long upon the Christian, he makes him throw over much precious lading of his joys and comforts; yea, sometimes he brings the soul through stress of temptation to think of quitting the ship, while for the present all hope of being saved seems to be taken away. Thus you see what we wrestle with devils for. We come to *application*.

SECT. IV.—*Use* 1. This is a word of reproof to four sorts of persons.

First, To those that are so far from wrestling against satan for this heavenly prize, that they resist the offer of it. Instead of taking heaven by force, they keep it off by force. How long hath the Lord been crying in our streets, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* How long have gospel-offers rung in our ears! And yet to this day many devil-deluded souls furiously drive on towards hell, and will not be persuaded back, who refuse to be called the children of God, and choose rather the devil's bondage than the glorious liberty with which Christ would make them free, esteeming the pleasures of sin for a season greater treasures than the riches of heaven. It is storied of Cato (who was Cæsar's bitter enemy), that when he saw Cæsar prevail, rather than fall into his hand and stand to his mercy, he laid violent hands on himself; which Cæsar hearing of, passionately broke out in these words: *O Cato, cur invidisti mihi salutem tuam?* O Cato, why didst thou envy me the honour of saving thy life? And do not many walk as if they grudged Christ the honour of saving their souls? What other account can you give, sinners, of rejecting his grace? Are not heaven and happiness things desirable, and to be preferred before sin and misery? Why then do you not embrace them? Or are they the worse, because they come swimming to you in the blood of Christ? Oh how ill must Christ take it to be thus used, when he comes on such a gracious embassy! May he not say to thee, as once he did to those officers sent to attack him, *Do you come out against me as a thief with swords and staves?* If he be a thief, it is only in this, that he would steal your sins from you, and leave heaven in their room. Oh, for the love of God, think what you do: it is eternal life you put away from you, in doing of which, *you judge yourselves unworthy of it*, Acts xiii. 46.

Secondly, It reproves those who are satan's instruments to rob souls of what is heavenly. Among thieves there are some ye call *setters*, who inquire where a booty is to be had; which when they

they have found, and know such a one travels with a charge about him, then they employ some other to rob him, and are themselves not seen in the business. The devil is the grand *setter;* he observes the Christian how he walks, what place and company he frequents, what grace or heavenly treasure he carries in his bosom; which when he hath done, he hath his instruments for the purpose to execute his design. Thus he considered the admirable graces of Job, and casts about how he might rob him of his heavenly treasure: and who but his wife and friends must do this for him? (well knowing that his tale would receive credit from their mouths). O friends, ask your consciences whether you have not done the devil some service of this kind in your days. Possibly you have a child or servant who once looked towards heaven, but your brow-beating of them scared them back, and now (may be) they are as carnal as you would have them: or possibly thy wife, before acquainted with thee, as full of life in the ways of God; but since she hath been transplanted into thy cold soil, what by thy frothy speeches and unsavoury conversation, at best thy worldliness and formality, she is now both decayed in her graces, and a loser in her comforts. O man, what an indictment will be brought against thee for this at God's bar! You would come off better, were it for robbing one of his money and jewels, than of his graces and comforts.

Thirdly, It reproves the woeful negligence most shew in labouring for this heavenly prize. None but would be glad their souls might be saved at last; but where is the man or woman that makes it appear by their vigorous endeavour, that they mean in earnest? What warlike preparation do they make against satan, who lies between them and home? Where are their arms, where their skill to use them, their resolution to stand to them, and conscionable care to exercise themselves daily in the use of them? Alas, this is a rarity indeed, not to be found in every house where the profession of religion is hung out at the door! If wishing would bring them to heaven, then they may come thither; but as for this wrestling and fighting, this making religion our business, they are as far from these, as at last they are like to be from heaven. They are of his mind, in Tully, who in a summer's day, as he lay indolently on the gaass, would say, O that this were to work, that I could lie here and do my day-labour! Thus many melt and waste their lives in sloth, and say in their hearts, O that this were the way to heaven! but will use no means to furnish themselves with grace for such an enterprize. I have read of a great Prince in Germany, invaded by a more potent enemy than himself, yet, from his friends and allies, who flocked in to his help, he soon had a good army, but no money (as he said) to pay them; but the truth is, he was loth to part with it; for which,

some

some in discontent went away, others did not vigorously attend his business, and so he was soon beaten out of his kingdom, and his coffers (when his palace was rifled) were found full of treasure. Thus he was ruined, as some sick men die, because unwilling to be at cost to pay the physician. It will add to the misery of damned souls, when they shall have leisure enough to consider what they have lost in losing God; to remember what means, offers, and talents they once had towards the obtaining of everlasting life, but had not a heart to use them.

Fourthly, It reproves those who make a great bustle and noise in religion, who are forward in profession, very busy to meddle with the strictest duties, as if heaven had monopolized their whole hearts: but like the eagle, when they tower highest, their prey is below, where their eye is also. Such a generation there ever was and will be, that mingle themselves with the saints of God, who pretend heaven, and have their outward garb faced and fringed, as it were, with heavenly speeches and duties, while their hearts are lined with hypocrisy, whereby they deceive others, and most of all themselves; such may be the world's saints, but devils in Christ's account. *Have not I chosen twelve? one of you is a devil.* And truly, of all devils, none so bad as the professing devil, the preaching, praying devil. O, sirs, be plain-hearted; religion is as tender as your eye, it will not be jested with: remember the vengeance which fell on Belshazzar, while he caroused in the bowels of the sanctuary. Religion and the duties of it are consecrated things, not made for thee to drink thy lusts out of. God hath remarkably appeared in discovering and confounding such as have prostituted sacred things to worldly ends. Jezebel fasts and prays, the better to devour Naboth's vineyard, but was devoured by it. Absalom was as sick till he had ravished his father's crown, as his brother Amnon till he had done the like to his sister; and to hide his treason, he puts on a religious cloak, and therefore begs leave to go and pay his vows in Hebron, when he had another game in chace; and did he not fall by the hand of his hypocrisy? Of all men, their judgment comes on with most speed, who silver over worldly or wicked enterprizes with heavenly semblances. Of this gang were those, 2 Pet. ii. 3. concerning whom the apostle saith, *Their damnation slumbers not;* and those, Ezek. xiv. 7, 8. to whom God saith, *I the Lord will answer him by myself, and I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord.*

Use 2. Secondly, Try whether they be heavenly things or earthly thou chiefly pursuest. Certainly, friends, we need not be so ignorant of our souls' state and affairs, did we oftener converse with

with our thoughts, and observe the haunts of our hearts. We soon can tell what dish pleaseth our palate best; and may you not tell whether heaven or earth be the most savoury meat to your souls? And if you should ask how you might know whether heaven be the prize you chiefly desire, I would put you only upon this double trial:

First, Art thou uniform in thy pursuit? Dost thou contend for heaven, and that which leads to heaven also? Earthly things God is pleased to retail; all have some, none have all: But in heavenly treasure he will not break the whole piece, and cut it into remnants. If thou wilt have heaven, thou must have Christ; if Christ, thou must like his service as well as his sacrifice; no holiness, no happiness. If God would cut off so much as would serve men's turns, he would have customers enough: Balaam himself likes one end of the piece: *he would die like a righteous man*, though live like a wizard, as he was; no, God will not deal with such pedling merchants: that man alone is for God, and God for him, who will come roundly up to God's offer, and take all off his hands. One fitly compares holiness and happiness to those two sisters, Leah and Rachel. Happiness, like Rachel, seems the fairer (even a carnal heart may fall in love with that); but holiness, like Leah, is the elder, and beautiful also, though in this life it appears with some disadvantage, her eyes being bleared with tears of repentance, and her face furrowed with the works of mortification: But this is the law of that heavenly country, *That the younger sister must not be bestowed before the elder*. We cannot enjoy fair Rachel, heaven and happiness, except we first embrace tender-eyed Leah, holiness, with all her severe duties of repentance and mortification. Now, sirs, how like you this method? Art thou content to marry Christ and his grace, and then (serving an hard apprenticeship in temptations both of prosperity and adversity, enduring the heat of the one, and the cold of the other) to wait till at last the other be given into thy bosom?

Secondly, If indeed heaven and heavenly things be the prize thou wrestlest for, thou wilt discover a heavenly deportment of heart even in earthly things. Wherever you meet a Christian, he is going to heaven; heaven is at the bottom of his lowest actions. Now observe thy heart in three particulars; in getting, in using, and in keeping earthly things, whether it be after a heavenly manner.

I. *In getting earthly things.* If heaven be thy chief prize, then thou wilt be ruled by a heavenly law in the gathering of these. Take a carnal wretch, and what his heart is set on he will have, though it be by hook or crook. A lie fits Gehazi's mouth well enough, so he may fill his pockets by it. Jezebel dares

dares mock God, and murder an innocent man for an acre or two of ground. Absalom, to be a king, what will he not do? God's fence is too low to keep a graceless heart in bounds when the game is before him: but a soul that hath heaven in his eye, is ruled by heaven's law; he dares not step out of heaven's road to take up a crown, as we see in David's carriage towards Saul.—Indeed, in so doing, he should cross himself in his own grand design, which is the glory of God, and the happiness of his own soul in enjoying of him; upon these very terms the servants of God have refused to be rich and great in the world, when either of these lay at stake: Moses threw his court-preferment at his heels, *refusing to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*—Abraham scorned to be made rich by the king of Sodom, Gen. xiv. 22. that he might avoid the suspicion of covetousness and self-seeking; it shall not be said another day, that he came to enrich himself with the spoil, more than to rescue his kinsmen.—Nehemiah would not take the tax and tribute to maintain his state, when he knew they were a poor peeled people, *because of the fear of the Lord.* Dost thou walk by this rule? Wouldst thou gather no more estate or honour than thou mayest have with God's leave, and will stand with thy hopes of heaven?

II. Dost thou discover a heavenly spirit in using these things?

First, The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous paunch, thy hawks and thy hounds; or lockest thou it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness, to strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? and so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, *but live and praise God,* Psal. cxix. 175. When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom, see what his desire was and hope, 2 Sam. xv. 25. *The king said unto Zadock, Carry back the ark of God into the city: If I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and shew me both it and his habitation.* Mark, not shew me my *crown, my palace,* but the *ark,* the *house of God.*

Secondly, A gracious heart pursues earthly things with a holy indifference, saving the violence and zeal of his spirit for the things of heaven: he useth the former as if he used them not, with a kind of non-attendance; his head and heart is taken up with higher matters, how he may please God, thrive in his grace, enjoy more intimate communion with Christ in his ordinances; in these he spreads all his sails, plies all his oars, strains every part and power. Thus we find David upon his full speed; *My soul*

soul presseth hard after thee, lxiii. And before the ark we find him dancing with all his might. Now a carnal heart is clean contrary: his zeal is for the world, and his indifference in the things of God; he prays as if he did not pray, &c. he sweats in his shop, but chills and grows cold in his closet: Oh how hard to raise him up to the duty of God's worship, or to get him to an ordinance! No weather shall keep him from the market; rain, blow, or snow, he goes thither: but if the church-path be but a little wet, or the air somewhat cold, 'tis apology enough for him if his pew be empty. When he is about any worldly business, he is earnest at it, as the idolatrous smith in hammering of his image, *who* (the prophet saith) *worketh it with the strength of his arms, yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth, he drinketh not, and is faint*, Isa. xliv. 12. So zealous is the muckworm in his worldly employments, that he will pinch his carcase, and deny himself his repast in due season, to pursue that; the kitchen there shall wait on the shop: But in the worship of God, 'tis enough to make him sick of the sermon, and angry with the preacher, if he be kept beyond his hour; here the sermon must give place to the kitchen: for the man, for his pleasures and carnal pastime, he tells no clock at his sports, and knows not how the day goes; when night comes, he is angry that it takes him off: But at any heavenly work, O how is the man punished! Time now hath got leaden heels, he thinks; all he does at a sermon is to tell the clock, and see how the glass runs. If men were not willing to deceive themselves, surely they might know which way their heart goes, by the swift motion, or the hard tugging and slow pace it stirs, as well as they know in a boat whether they row against the tide or with it.

Thirdly, The Christian useth these things with a holy fear, lest earth should rob heaven, and his outward enjoyments prejudice his heavenly interest: he eats in fear, works in fear, rejoiceth in his abundance with fear: as Job sanctified his children by offering a sacrifice, out of a fear lest they had sinned; so the Christian is continually sanctifying his earthly enjoyments by prayer, that he may be delivered from the snare of them.

III. The Christian is heavenly in his keeping of earthly things. The same heavenly law which he went by in getting, he observes in holding them. As he dares not say he will be rich and honourable in the world, but if God will; so neither that he will hold what he hath; he only keeps them while his heavenly Father calls for them that at first gave them: if God will continue them to him, and entail them on his posterity too, he blesseth God, and so he desires to do also when he takes them away. Indeed God's meaning in the great things of this world, which sometimes he throws in upon the saints, is chiefly to give them the

the greater advantage of expressing their love to him, in denying them for his sake. God never intended by that strange providence in bringing Moses to Pharaoh's court, to settle him there in worldly pomp and grandeur (a carnal heart indeed would have expounded providence, and interpreted it as a fair occasion put into his hands by God to have advanced himself into the throne, which some say he might in time have done); but as an opportunity to make his faith and self-denial more eminently conspicuous in throwing all these at his heels, for which he hath so honourable a remembrance among the Lord's worthies, Heb. xi. 24, 25. And truly a gracious soul reckons he cannot make so much of his worldly interests any other way as by offering them up for Christ's sake; however that traitor thought Mary's ointment might have been carried to a better market, yet no doubt that good woman herself was only troubled that she had not one more precious to pour on her dear Saviour's head. This makes the Christian ever to hold the sacrificing knife at the throat of his worldly employments, ready to offer them up when God calls; overboard they shall go, rather than hazard a wreck of faith or a good conscience; he sought them in the last place, and therefore he will part with them in the first. Naboth will hazard the king's anger (which at last cost him his life), rather than sell an acre or two of land which was his birth-right. The Christian will expose all he hath in this world to preserve his hopes for another. Jacob, in his march towards Esau, sent his servants with his flocks before, and came himself with his wives behind; if he can save any thing from his brother's rage, it shall be what he loves best: If the Christian can save any thing, it shall be his soul, his interest in Christ and heaven; and then no matter if the rest go: even then he can say, not as Esau to Jacob, I have a great deal; but as Jacob to him, I have all, Gen. xxxiii. 9. 11. All I want, all I desire, as David expresseth it, *This is all my salvation, and all my desire*, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Now try whether thy heart be tuned to this note. Does heaven give law to thy earthly enjoyments? Wouldst thou not keep thy honour, estate, no, not life itself, to prejudice thy heavenly nature and hopes? Which wouldst thou chuse, if thou couldst not keep both, a whole skin, or a sound conscience? It was a strange answer, if true, which, the historian saith, Henry V. gave to his father, who had usurped the crown, and now dying, sent for this his son, to whom he said, Fair son, take the crown (which stood on his pillow by his head); but God knows how I came by it. To whom he answered, I care not how you came by it; now I have it, I will keep it as long as my sword can defend it. He that keeps earth by wrong, cannot expect heaven by right.

CHAP.

CHAP. XIII.

An Exhortation to the Pursuit of Heaven and Heavenly Things.

Use 3. THIRDLY, Is it heaven and all that is heavenly that satan seeks to hinder us of? Let this provoke us the more earnestly to contend for them. Had we to do with an enemy that came only to plunder us of earthly trifles; would honours, estates, and what this world affords us, stay his stomach; it might suffer a debate, in a soul that hath hopes of heaven, whether it were worth fighting to keep this lumber; but Christ and heaven, these sure are too precious to part withal upon any terms. *Ask the kingdom for him also*, said Solomon to Bathsheba, when she begged Abishag for Adonijah. What can the devil leave thee worth, if he deprive thee of these? And yet I confess I have heard of one, that wished God would let him alone, and not take him from what he had here: Vile brute! the choice of a swine, and not a man, that could choose to wallow in the dung and ordure of his carnal pleasures, and wish himself for ever shut up with his swill in the hog's coat of this dunghill earth, rather than leave these to dwell in heaven's palace, and be admitted to no meaner pleasures than what God himself with his saints enjoy.—It were even just if God gave such brutes as these a swine's face to their swinish hearts: But alas, how few then should we meet that would have the countenance of a man? the greatest part of the world, even all that are carnal and worldly, being of the same mind, though not so impudent as that wretch, to speak what they think. The lives of men tell plain enough what they say in their hearts, it is good being here, that they wish they could build tabernacles on earth for all the mansions that are prepared in heaven. The transgression of the wicked said in David's heart that *the fear of God was not before them*, Psal. xxxvi. 1. And may not the worldliness of a muckworm say in the heart of any rational man, that heaven and heavenly excellencies are not before their eyes or thoughts. O, what a deep silence is there concerning these in the conversations of men! Heaven is such a stranger to the most, that very few are heard to inquire the way thither, or so much as ask the question in earnest, What shall they do to be saved? The most express no more desires of attaining heaven, than those blessed souls now in heaven do of coming again to dwell on earth; alas, their heads are full of other projects; they are either, as Israel, scattered over the face of the earth to gather straw, or busied to pick that straw they have gathered, labouring to get the world, or pleasing themselves with what they have

have got. So that it is no more than needs to use some arguments to call men off the world to the pursuit of heaven, and what is heavenly.

First, For earthly things, it is not necessary that thou hast them; that is necessary which cannot be supplied *per vicarium*, with somewhat besides itself. Now, there is no such earthly enjoyments, but may be supplied, as to make its room more desirable than its company. In heaven there shall be light, and no sun; a rich feast and yet no meat; glorious robes, and yet no clothes; there shall want nothing, and yet none of this worldly glory be found there; yea, even while we are here, they may be recompensed: Thou mayest be under infirmities of body, and yet better than if thou hadst health: *The inhabitants shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity*, Isa. xxxiii. 34. Thou mayest miss of worldly honour, and obtain with those worthies of Christ, Heb. xi. a good report by faith, and that is a name better than those of the great ones of the earth; thou mayest be poor in the world, and yet rich in grace; and *godliness with content is great gain.* In a word, if thou partest with thy temporal life, and findest an eternal, what dost thou lose by thy change? But heaven and heavenly things are such as cannot be recompensed with any other. Thou hast a heavenly soul in thy bosom; lose that, and where canst thou have another? There is but one heaven; miss that, and where can you take up your lodging but in hell? One Christ that can lead you thither; reject him, *and there remains no more sacrifice for sin.* O that men would think on these things! Go, sinner, to the world, and see what it can afford you in lieu of these; may be it will offer to entertain you with its pleasures and delights: O poor reward for the loss of Christ and heaven! Is this all thou canst get? Doth satan rob thee of heaven and happiness, and only give thee this posy to smell on as thou art going to thy execution? Will these quench hell-fire, or so much as cool those flames thou art falling into? Who but those that have blinded their understandings would take these toys and new-nothings for Christ and heaven? While satan is pleasing your fancies with these rattles and baubles, his hand is in your treasure robbing you of that which is only necessary: 'Tis more necessary to be saved than to be, better not to be than to have a being in hell.

Secondly, Earthly things are such, as it is a great uncertainty whether with all our labour we can have them or not. The world, though so many thousand years old, hath not learned the merchant such a method of trading, as that from it he may infallibly conclude he shall at last get an estate by his trade; nor the courtier such rules of comporting himself to the humour of his prince, as to assure him he shall rise. They are but few that carry

carry away the prize in the world's lottery; the greater number have only their labour for their pains, and a sorrowful remembrance left them of their egregious folly, to be led such a wild-goose chace after that which hath deceived them at last. But now for heaven, and the things of heaven, there is such a clear and certain rule laid down, that if we will but take the counsel of the Word, we can neither mistake the way, nor in that way miscarry of the end. *As many as walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and the whole Israel of God.* There are some indeed who run, and yet obtain not this prize, that seek and find not, knock and find the door shut upon them; but it is, because they do it either not in the right manner, or in the right season. Some would have heaven; but if God save them, he must save their sins also, for they do not mean to part with them; and how heaven can hold God and such company together, judge you: As they come in at one door, Christ and all those holy spirits with him would run out at the other. Ungrateful wretches, that will not come to this glorious feast, unless they may bring that with them which would disturb the joy of that blissful state, and offend all the guests that sit at the table with them; yea, drive God out of his own mansion-house. A second sort would have heaven, but like him, in Ruth, iv. 2, 3, 4. who had a mind to his kinsman Elimelech's land, and would have paid for the purchase, but he liked not to have it by marrying Ruth, and so missed of it.—Some seem very forward to have heaven and salvation, if their own righteousness could procure the same (all the good they do, and duties they perform, they lay up for this purchase), but at last perish, because they close not with Christ, and take not heaven in his right. A third sort are content to have it by Christ; but their desires are so impotent and listless, that they put them upon no vigorous use of means to obtain him, and so (like the sluggard) they starve, because they will not pull their hands out of their bosom of sloth to reach their food that is before them; for the world they have metal enough, and too much; they trudge far and near for that, and when they have run themselves out of breath, can stand and *pant after the dust of the earth,* as the prophet phraseth it, Amos ii. 7. But for Christ, and obtaining interest in him, O how key-cold are they! There is a kind of cramp invades all the powers of their souls when they should pray, hear, examine their hearts, draw out their affections in hungerings and thirstings after his grace and spirit. It is strange to see how they even now went full soop to the world, are suddenly becalmed, not a breath of wind stirring to any purpose in their souls after these things: And is it any wonder that Christ and heaven should be denied to them that have no more mind to them? Lastly, Some have zeal enough to have Christ and heaven, but it

is when the Master of the house is risen, and hath shut the door; and truly when they may stand long enough rapping before any come to let them in. There is no gospel preached in another world; but as for thee, poor soul, who art persuaded to renounce thy lusts, throw away the conceit of thy own righteousness, that thou mayest run with more speed to Christ, and art so possessed with the excellency of Christ, thy own present need of him, and salvation by him, that thou pantest after him more than life itself: In God's name, go on and speed, be of good comfort, he calls thee by name to come unto him, that thou mayest have rest for thy soul. There is an office in the Word where thou mayest have thy soul and its external happiness insured to thee. Those that come to him, as he will himself in nowise cast away, so not suffer any other to pluck them away. *This day* (saith Christ to Zaccheus) *salvation is come to thy house,* Luke xix. 9. Salvation comes to thee, poor soul, that openest thy heart to receive Christ; thou hast eternal life already, as sure as if thou wast a glorified saint now walking in that heavenly city. O, sirs, if there were a free trade proclaimed to the Indies, enough of gold for all that went, and a certainty of making a safe voyage, who would stay at home? But alas, this can never be had: All this, and infinitely more, may be said for heaven; and yet how few leave the uncertain hopes of the world to trade for it? What account can be given for this, but the desperate atheism of men's hearts? They are not yet fully persuaded whether the scripture speaks true or not, whether they may rely upon the discovery that God makes in his Word of this new-found land, and those mines of spirituals there to be had, as certain. God opens the eyes of the unbelieving world (as he did the prophets' servants) that they may see these things to be realities, not fictions; 'tis faith only that gives a being to these things in our hearts. By faith Moses saw him that was invisible.

Thirdly, Earthly things when we have them, we are not sure of them; like birds, they hop up and down, now on this hedge, and anon upon that; none can call them his own; rich to-day, and poor to-morrow; in health when we lie down, and arrested with pangs of death before midnight: joyful parents, one while solacing ourselves with the hopes of our budding posterity, and perhaps 'ere long knocks one of Job's messengers at our door to tell us they are all dead now in honour; but who knows whether we shall not live to see that buried in scorn and reproach? The scripture compares the multitude of people to waters; the great ones of the world sit upon these waters; as the ship floats upon the waves, so do their honours upon the breath and favour of the multitude; and how long is he like to sit that is carried upon a wave? One while they are mounted up to heaven (as David speaks

speaks of the ship), and then down again they fall into the deep. *We have ten parts in the king* (say the men of Israel), 2 Sam. xix. 43. and in the very next verse, Sheba doth but sound a trumpet of sedition, saying, *We have no part in David, no inheritance in the son of Jesse,* and the wind is in another corner presently; for it is said, *Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba.* Thus was David cried up and down, and that almost in the same breath. Unhappy man he, that hath no surer portion than what this variable world will offer him! The time of mourning for the departure of all earthly enjoyments is at hand; we shall see them, as Eglon's servants did their lord, fallen down dead before us, and weep because they are not. What folly, then, is it to dandle this vain world in our affections (whose joy, like the child's laughter on the mother's knee, is sure to end in a cry at last), and neglect heaven and heavenly things, which endure for ever! O remember *Dives* stirring up his pillow, and composing himself to rest, how he was called up with the tidings of death before he was warm in his bed of ease, and laid with sorrow on another, which God had made for him in flames, from whence we hear him roaring in the anguish of his conscience. O soul, couldst thou but get an interest in the heavenly things we are speaking of, these would not thus slip from under thee: heaven is a kingdom that cannot be shaken, Christ an abiding portion, his graces and comforts sure waters that fail not, but spring up unto eternal life. The quails that were food for the Israelites' lust soon ceased; but the rock that was drink to their faith followed them. This rock is Christ: make sure of him, and he'll make sure of thee: he'll follow thee to thy sick bed, and lie in thy bosom, cheering thy heart with his sweet comforts, when worldly joys lie cold upon thee (as David's clothes upon him), and no warmth of comfort to be got from them. When thy outward senses are locked up, that thou canst neither see the face of thy dear friends, nor hear the counsel and comfort they would give thee, then he will come (though these doors be shut) and say, Peace be to thee, my dear child; fear not death or devils; I stay to receive thy last breath, and have here my angels waiting, that as soon as thy soul is breathed out of thy body, they may carry and lay it in my bosom of love, where I will nourish thee with those eternal joys that my blood hath purchased, and my love prepared for thee.

Fourthly, Earthly things are empty and unsatisfying. We may have too much, but never enough of them: they oft breed loathing, but never content; and indeed how should they, being so disproportionate to the vast desires of these immortal spirits that dwell in our bosoms? A spirit hath not flesh and bones, neither can it be fed with such; and what hath th world, but a

few bones covered over with some fleshly delights, to give it? The less is blessed of the greater, not the greater of the less.—These things therefore being so far inferior to the nature of man, he must look higher, if he will be blessed, even to God himself, who is the Father of spirits. God intended these things for our use, not enjoyment; and what folly is it to think we can squeeze that from them which God never put in them! They are breasts, that, moderately drawn, yield good milk, nourishing and refreshing; but strain them too hard, and you will suck nothing but wind or blood from them. We lose what they have, by expecting what they have not: none find less sweetness, and more dissatisfaction in these things, than those that strive most to find pleasure in them. The cream of the creature floats at the top; and he that is not content to skim it, but thinks by drinking a deeper draught to find yet more, goes further to speed worse, being sure, by the disappointment he shall meet, to pierce himself through with many sorrows. But all these fears might happily be escaped, if thou shouldst turn thy back on the creature, and face about for heaven. Labour to get Christ, and through him hopes of heaven, and thou takest the right road to content; thou shalt see it before thee, and enjoy the prospect of it as thou goest; yea, find that every step brings thee nearer and nearer to it. O what a sweet change wouldst thou find! As a sick man coming out of an impure, unwholesome climate, where he never was well, when he gets into fresh air, or his native soil, so wilt thou find a cheering of thy spirit, and reviving thy soul with unspeakable content and peace. Having once closed with Christ, first the guilt of all thy sins is gone, and this spoiled all thy mirth before; all your dancing of a child, when some pin pricks it, will not make it quiet or merry; well, now that pin is taken out which robbed thee of the joy of thy life. Secondly, Thy nature is renewed and sanctified, and when is a man at ease, if not when in health? And what is holiness, but the creature restored to his right temper in which God created him? Thirdly, Thou becomest a child of God, and that cannot but please thee well, I hope, to be son or daughter to so great a King. Fourthly, thou hast a right to heaven's glory, whither thou shalt 'ere long be conducted to take and hold possession of that thy inheritance for ever: And who can tell what that is? Nicephorus tells of one Agbarus, a great man, that hearing so much of Christ's fame, by reason of the miracles he wrought, sent a painter to take his picture; and that the painter, when he came, was not able to do it, because of that radiancy of divine splendour which sat on Christ's face.—Whether this be true or no, I leave it; but to be sure, there is such a brightness on the face of Christ glorified, and that happiness which in heaven saints shall have with him, as forbid us,

that

that dwell in mortal flesh, to conceive of it aright, much more to express; 'tis best going thither to be informed, and then we shall confess we on earth heard not half of what we there find; yea, and that our present conceptions are no more like to that vision of glory we shall there have, than the sun in the painter's table is to the sun itself in the heavens. And if all these be so, why then do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not, yea, for that which keeps you from that which can satisfy? Earthly things are like some trash, which do not only not nourish, but take away the appetite from that which would: heaven and heavenly things are not relished by a soul vitiated like these. Manna, though for deliciousness called angels' food, yet but light bread to an Egyptian palate. But these spiritual things depend not on thy opinion, O man, whoever thou art (as earthly things in a great measure do), that the value of them should rise or fall as the world's exchange doth, and as vain man is pleased to rate them. Think gold dirt, and it is so, for all the royal stamp on it; count the swelling titles of worldly honour (that proud dust so brags in) vanity, and they are such: but have base thoughts of Christ, and he is not the worse; slight heaven as much as ye will, it will be heaven still. And when thou comest so far to thy wits, with the prodigal, as to know which is the best fare, husks or bread; where is the best living, among hogs in the field, or in thy Father's house; then thou shalt know how to judge of these heavenly things better: till then, go and make the best market thou canst of the world, but look not to find this pearl of price, true satisfaction to thy soul, in any of the creature shops; and were it not better to take it when thou mayest have it, than after thou hast wearied thyself in vain in following the creature, to come back with shame, and may be miss of it here also, because thou wouldst not have it when it was offered?

VERSE XIII.

Wherefore take unto you the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

THE apostle in these words resumes his former exhortation, mentioned ver. 11. and presseth it with a new force from that more particular discovery which he gives of the enemy, ver. 12. where, like a faithful scout, he makes a full report of satan's great power and malice, and also discloseth what a dangerous

design he hath upon the saints, no less than to despoil them of all that is heavenly; From which he gives them a second alarm, and bids them *Arm! arm! wherefore take unto you*, &c. In the words consider,

First, The exhortation with the inference, *Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God.*

Secondly, The argument with which he urgeth the exhortation, and that is double.

First, *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.*

Secondly, *Having done all, to stand;* that is, both able to fight, and able to conquer. As for the first general, *the exhortation*, we shall wave it as to the substance of it, being the same with what we have handled, ver. 11. Only there are two observables which we shall lightly touch. The one from the repetition of the very same exhortation so soon, one verse only interposed. The other from the verb the apostle useth here; which being not the same with ver. 11. affords a different note. There it is, *endusasthe*, here, *analambanete.*

CHAP. I.

The Reason why the Apostle renews the same Exhortation; and also what Truths Ministers are often to preach to their People.

FIRST, of the first, the repetition of the same exhortation, and that in so short a space. Sure it was not for want of matter, but rather out of abundance of zeal, that he harps the second time on the same string. Indeed, he is the better workman, who drives one nail home with reiterated blows, than he which covets to enter many, but fastens none. Such preachers are not likely to reach the conscience, who hop from one truth to another, but dwell on none. Every hearer is not so quick as the preacher, to take a notion as it is first darted forth; neither can many carry away so much of the sermon, which is made up all of varieties (where a point is no sooner named, but presently pulls back its hand, and another makes a breach and comes forth, before the first hath been opened and hammered upon the conscience by a powerful application). As where the discourse is homogeneal, and some one necessary truth is cleared, insisted on, and urged home with blow upon blow; here the whole matter of the discourse is akin, and one part remembered brings the memory acquainted with the other; whereas in the former, one puts out the other in a weak memory. Short hints and away may please

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a scholar, but not so profitable for others; the one more fit for the schools, but the other for the pulpit. Were I to buy a garment in the shop, I should like him better that lays one good piece or two before me that are for my turn (which I may fully peruse), than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon piece, merely to shew his store, till at last for variety I can look wishfully on none, they lie so one upon another.

Again, As it is profitable thus to insist on truths, so it is not unbecoming a minister to preach the same truths again and again: Paul here goes over and over the same exhortation, ver. 11. ver. 13. and elsewhere tells us, *This is not grievous to him, but to them it is safe,* to hear the same thing over and over, Phil. iii. 1. There are three sorts of truths, which must in our ministry be preached oft.

First, *Fundamental truths;* or, as we call them, catechise points, that contain truths necessary to be known and believed.—The weight of the whole building lies on these ground-cells more than on superstructory truths. In a kingdom there are some staple commodities and trades, without which the common-weal could not subsist, as wool, corn, &c. in our country; and these ought to be encouraged above others (which, though they be an ornament to the nation, yea, add to the riches of it, yet are not so necessary to the subsistence of it). Thus here, there is an excellent use of our other ministerial labours, as they tend to beautify and adorn, yea, enrich the Christian with the knowledge of spiritual mysteries; but that which is chiefly to be regarded, is the constant faithful opening of those main truths of the gospel; these are the land-marks, and shew us the bounds of truths: and as it is in towns that border one upon another, if the inhabitants do not sometimes perambulate, and walk the bounds (to shew the youth what they are), when the old studs are gone, the next generation may lose all their privileges by their encroaching neighbours, because not able to tell what is their own. There is no fundamental truth but hath some evil neighbour (heresy I mean) bordering on it; and the very reason why a spirit of error hath so encroached of late years upon truth, is, because we have not walked the bounds with our people, in acquainting them with, and establishing their judgments on these fundamental points, so frequently and carefully as is requisite. And people are so much in fault, because they cast so much contempt upon this work, that they count a sermon on such points next to lost, and only child's meat.

Secondly, *Those truths are oft to be preached, which ministers observe to be most undermined by satan or his instruments in the judgments or lives of their people.* The preacher must read and study his people as diligently as any book in his study;

and as he finds them, dispense like a faithful steward unto them. Paul takes notice that the Galatians had been in ill handling by false apostles, who had even bewitched them back to the law in that great point of justification, and see how he bears upon that point. Our people complain, we are so much, so oft reproving the same error or sin; and the fault is their own, because they will not leave it: who will blame the dog for continuing to bark, when the thief is all the while in the yard? Alas, alas, it is not once or twice rousing against sin, will do it. When people think the minister shews his laziness, because he preaches the same things, he may then be exercising his patience, in continuing to exhort and reprove those who oppose waiting if at last God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth. We are bid to lift up our voice like a trumpet, and would you have us cease while the battle lasts, or sound a retreat when it should be a battle?

Thirdly, *Truths of daily use and practice.* These are like bread and salt; whatever else is on, these must be on the board every meal. St. Peter was of this mind, 2 Pet. 1. 12. *I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them.* He had (you may see) been speaking of such graces and duties, that they could not pass a day without the exercise of them, and therefore will be ever their monitor to stir up their pure minds about them. All is not well, when a man is weary of his ordinary food, and nothing will go down but rarities; the stomach is sickly, when a man delights rather to pick some sallad than eat of solid meat: and how far this dainty age is gone in this spiritual disease, I think few are so far come to themselves, as yet to consider and lament. O sirs, be not weary, as in doing, so not in hearing those savoury truths preached you have daily use of, because ye know them, and have heard them often: faith and repentance will be good doctrine to preach and hear to the end of the world. You may as well quarrel with God because he hath made but one heaven, and one way to it, as be offended at the preacher for preaching these over and over. If thy heart be humble, and thy palate spiritual, old truths would be new to thee every time thou hearest them. In heaven, the saints drew all their wine of joy (as I may say) at one tap, and shall to all eternity, and yet it never tastes flat. God is that one object their souls are filled with, and never weary of; and can any thing of God and his love be wearisome to thee in the hearing here? I am not all this while an advocate for any loiterer in our Lord's vineyard, for any slothful servant in the work of the gospel, who wraps up his talent in idleness, or buries it in the earth, where, may be, he is digging and playing the worldling all the week, and then hath nothing to set before his people on the Lord's day, but one or two mouldy loaves, which were kneaded

kneaded many years before. This is not the good steward; here is the old, but where are the new things which he should bring out of his treasure? If the minister labours not to increase his stock, he is the worst thief in the parish. It is wicked for a man, trusted with improving of orphans' estates, to let them lie dead by him; much more for a minister not to improve his gifts (which I may call the town-stock, given for the good of the souls of both rich and poor). If that preacher was wise (Eccl. xii. 9.) who still *taught the people knowledge*, that is, was ever going on, endeavouring to build them higher in knowledge, and that he might, did *give good head*, *and sought*, *and set in order*, *many proverbs*; then surely he will be proved a foolish preacher at last, that wastes his time in sloth, or spends more of it in studying how to add to his estate out of his people's, than how to add to their gifts and graces, by a conscionable endeavour to increase his own.

CHAP. II.

The best of Saints subject to decline in their Graces, and why we are to endeavour a Recovery of Decays in Grace.

THE second observable in the exhortation, is taken from the verb which the apostle useth, *analambanete*, which signifies not only to take, but to take again, or recover a thing which we have lost, or reassume a thing which for the present we have left. Now the apostle writing to the saints at Ephesus, who (at least many of them) were not now to put on this armour by a conversion (or the first work of faith, which no doubt had already past upon many among them), he, in regard of them and believers to the end of the world, had a further meaning, i. e. That they would put on more clothes where this armour hangs loose, and they would recover where they have let fall any duty, or decayed in any grace. So that the note is,

Doct. That the Christian should have an especial care to repair his broken armour, to recover his decayed graces. This armour may be battered; I might shew sad examples in the several pieces. Was not Jacob's girdle of truth and sincerity unbuckled, when he used that sinful policy to get the blessing? He was not the plain man then, but the supplanter; but he had as good have stayed God's time: he was paid home in his own kind: he puts a cheat on his father; and did not Laban put a cheat on him, giving Leah for Rachel? What say you of David's breastplate of righteousness, in the matter of Uriah? Was it not shot through, and that holy man fearfully wounded, who lay almost a year

year (for aught we read of him) before he came to himself, so far as to be thoroughly sensible of his sin, till Nathan, a faithful chirurgeon, was sent to search the wound, and clear it of that dead flesh which had grown over it? And Jonah (otherwise a holy prophet) when God would send him on an errand to Nineveh, he hath his shoes to seek, I mean that preparation and readiness with which his mind should have been shod, to have gone at the first call.—Good Hezekiah, we find how near his helmet of hope was of being beat off his head, who tells us himself what his thoughts were in the day of his distress; that he *should not see the Lord in the land of the living*, expecting that God would never let go his hold *till like a lion he had broke his bones, and at last made an end of him*. Even Abraham himself, famous for faith, yet had his fits of unbelief and distrustful qualms coming over his valiant heart. Now in this case, the Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily prepared: a battered helmet is next to no helmet, in point of present use; grace in a decay, is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives this church of Ephesus (to whom Paul wrote his epistle) this counsel, *To remember from whence she was fallen, to repent and do her first works*. How many does a declining Christian wrong at once!

First, He wrongs God, and that in a high degree, because God reckons upon more honour to be paid him in by his saints grace, than by all other talents which his creatures have to trade with in the world. He can in some sense better bear the open sins of the world, than the decays of his saints graces; They, by abusing their talents, rob him of his *oil, flax and wool;* but the Christian by the other bereaves him of the glory which should be paid him from his faith, zeal, patience, self-denial, sincerity, and the rest. Suppose a master should trust one servant with his money, and another with his child to look to; would he not be more displeased to see his dear child hurt, or almost killed, by the negligence of the one, than his money stolen by the carelessness of the other? Grace is the new creature, the birth of the spirit; when this comes to any harm by the Christian's careless walking, it must needs go nearer the heart of God, than the wrong he hath from the world, who are trusted with nothing like this.

Secondly, He that declines in grace, and labours not to repair it, he wrongs his brethren, who have a share in one another's grace: He wrongs his whole body, that seeks not cure for a wound in any member. We are bid *to love one another*, 2 John v. 5. But how shall we shew our love to one another? The very next will direct us: *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments*. Indeed, we shew little love to our brethren by

by sinning, whereby we are sure either to ensnare them, or grieve them: And how to let grace go down, and sin not go up, is a riddle to any that know what they both are.

Thirdly, The Christian wrongs himself in not endeavouring to repair his broken armour, and recover his declining grace. By this he loses the evidence of his inheritance, or at least so blots it, that it cannot be so clearly perceived by him. A declining Christian must needs be a doubting Christian, because the common symptom of an hypocrite is, to wear and waste like a stake set in the ground, which rots, while true grace, like the tree, grows. Is not this the knot which the devil puzzleth many poor souls withal, and finds them work for many years to untie? If thou wast a Christian, thou wouldst grow; right saints go on from strength to strength, and thou goest from strength to weakness.—They go up the hill to Zion: every ordinance and providence is a step that bears them nearer heaven: But thou goest down the hill, and art further from thy salvation than when thou didst first believe (as thou thoughtest). And doth it stand with thy wisdom, Christian, to put a staff into the devil's hand, an argument into his mouth, to dispute against thy salvatiou with? If you held an estate by the life of a child, which upon the death of it should all go away from you, that child I warrant you should be well looked unto; his head should not ache, but you would post to the physician for counsel. I pray what is your evidence for that glorious estate you hope for? Is it not Christ within you? Is not this new creature (which may be well called Christ, for its likeness to him) the young heir of heaven's glory? And when that is sick or weak, is it not time to use all means for its recovery? While thus, thou canst neither live nor die comfortably. Not live.—A man in a consumption has little joy of life; he neither finds sweetness in his meat, nor delight in his work, as an healthful man doth. Oh, how sweet is the promise of faith, when active and vigorous! How easy the yoke of the command to the Christian, when his conscience is not galled with guilt, nor his strength enfeebled by temptation? But the Christian in a declining condition, he tastes not the promise; every command is grievous, and every duty burdensome to him: He goes in pain like one whose foot is out of joint, though the way be never so pleasant. And he is as unfit to die, as he is to live. Such a one can like no more to hear the news of death, than a tenant that wants his rent doth to hear of the quarter-day. This made David beg time of God; *Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength.*

Having shewn you why the Christian should endeavour to recover his declining graces, it will be requisite to give a word of counsel to the Christian.

First, To direct him how to judge of the declining state of grace,

grace, that he may not pass a false judgment upon himself therein.

Secondly, to direct him when he finds grace to be in a declination, how he may recover it.

CHAP. III.

A cautionary Direction from what we may not, as also from what we may, judge our Graces to be in a Declination.

Quest. FIRST, of the first, *How may a Christian judge, whether grace be declining in him, or no?*

Ans. First, I shall resolve this negatively, and shew by what he is not to judge his grace to decline.

Secondly, Positively, by what he may certainly conclude a decay of grace.

First, Negatively, and that in several particulars.

1. Christian, do not judge grace to be fallen weaker, because thy sense of corruption is grown stronger: This oft lies at the bottom of poor souls' complaints in this case. Oh! they never felt pride, hypocrisy, and other corruptions to haunt them, as now: none knows how they are vexed with these and the like, besides themselves. Now let me ask thee, who makes this sad moan, whether thou dost not think these corruptions were in thee before thou didst thus feel them? How oft hast thou prayed as formally, and not been troubled! How oft hast thou stood chatting with the same lusts, and thy soul hath not been laid low before the Lord with such abasement of thyself as now! Deal faithfully between God and thy soul, and tell not a lie for God, by bearing false witness against thyself. If it be thus, thou hast rather a comfortable sign of grace growing, than decaying. Sin cannot be on the getting hand, if the sense of sin grow quick.—This is the concomitant of a thriving soul; none so full of complaints of their own hearts, as such: the least sin goes now to their very souls, which makes them think viler of themselves than ever; but it is not the increase of sin in them, but the advance of their love to Christ makes them judge so. When the sun shines with some power, and the year gets up, we observe, though we may have frost and snow, yet they do not lie long, but are soon dissolved by the sun. Oh, 'tis a sweet sign that the love of Christ shines with a force upon thy soul, that no corruptions can lie long in thy bosom, but they melt into sorrow and bitter complaints.—That is the decaying soul, where sin lies bound up and frozen; little sense of, or sorrow for it appears.

Secondly,

Secondly, Take heed thou thinkest not grace decays, because thy comfort withdraws. The influence of the sun comes where the light of it is not to be found; yea, is mighty, as appears in those mines of gold and silver which are concocted by the same. And so may the actings of grace be vigorous in thee, when least under the shines of his countenance. Did ever faith triumph more than in our Saviour, crying, *My God, My God!* Here faith was at its meridian, when it was midnight in respect of joy.—Possibly thou comest from an ordinance, and bringest not home with thee those sheaves of comfort thou usest to do, and therefore concludest that grace acts not in thee as formerly. Truly, if thou hast nothing else to go by, thou mayest wrong the grace of God in thee exceedingly; because thy comfort is extrinsical to thy duty, a boon which God may give or not, yea doth give to the weak, and deny to the strong. The traveller may go as fast, and ride as much ground, when the sun doth not shine, as when it doth (though indeed he goes not so merrily on his journey); nay, sometimes he makes the more haste; the warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter; but when dark and cold, he puts on with more speed. Some graces thrive best (like some flowers) in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

Thirdly, Take heed thou dost not mistake, and think thy grace decays, when may be 'tis only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace decrease. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast, when an hundred weight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burden, that therefore he was grown weaker; you would soon tell him where his mistake lies. Temptation lies not in the same heaviness always upon the Christian's shoulder: observe therefore whether satan is not more than ordinary let loose to assault thee; whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever; possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater, than in overcoming the less. The same ship that, when light-ballasted, and favoured with the wind, goes mounting, at another time deeply laden, and going against wind and tide, may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus, than they did when it went faster.

Secondly, Positively, how thou mayest conclude that grace is declining; and that in a threefold respect.

First, In reference to temptations to sin.

Secondly, In reference to the duties of God's worship.

Thirdly, The frame of thy heart in wordly employments.

First, In reference to sin; and that is threefold.

1. When thou art not so wakeful to discover the encroachings of

of sin upon thee as formerly. At one time we find David's heart smote him, when he but rent the skirt of Saul's garment: At another time, when his eye glanced on Bathsheba, he takes no such notice of the snare satan had him in, and so is led from one sin to another; which plainly shews that grace in him was heavy-eyed, and his heart not in so holy a frame as it had been. If an enemy comes up to the gates, and the centinel not so much as give an alarm to the city of his approach, it shews he is off his guard, either fallen asleep or worse. If grace were awake, and thy conscience had not contracted some hardness, it would do its office.

2. When a temptation to sin is discovered, and thou findest thy heart shut up, that thou dost not pray against it, or not with that zeal and holy indignation as formerly upon such occasions, it is a bad sign, that lust hath got an advantage of thy grace, that thou canst not readily betake thyself to thy arms.—Thy affections are bribed, and this makes thee so cold a suitor at the throne of grace, for help against thine enemy.

3. When the arguments prevailing most with thee to resist temptations to sin, or mourn for sin committed, are more carnal and less evangelical than formerly. May be thou rememberest when thy love to Christ would have spit fire on the face of satan tempting thee to such a sin; but now that holy fire is so abated, that if there were not some other carnal motives to make the vote full, it would hazard to be carried for it, rather than against it. And so in mourning for a sin, there is possibly some slavish arguments (like an onion in the eye) which makes thee weep, rather than pure ingenuity arising from love to God, whom thou hast offended. This speaks a sad decay; and the more mixture there is of such carnal arguments, either in the resisting of, or mourning for sin, the greater the declination of grace is. David's natural heat was much decayed, when he needed so many clothes to be laid on him, and he yet feel so little heat; the time was he would have sweat with fewer. I am afraid, many their love to Christ will be found, in these declining times, to have lost so much of its youthful vigour, that what would formerly have put them into an holy fury and burning zeal against some sins, such as sabbath-breaking, pride of apparel, neglect of family-duties, &c. hath now much ado to keep any heat at all in them against the same.

Secondly, In point of family duties of worship.

1. If thy heart doth not prompt thee with that forwardness and readiness as formerly, to hold communication with God in any duty. Possibly thou knowest the time when thy heart echoed back to the motions of God's spirit, bidding thee, *Seek his face; Thy face, Lord, will I seek:* Yea, thou didst long as much till a sermon or sermon-season came, as a carnal wretch doth till it

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be gone; but now thy pulse doth not beat so quick a march to the ordinances, public or secret. Nature cannot but decay, if appetite to food go away: A craving soul is the thriving soul, such a child that will not let his mother rest, but is frequently crying for the breast.

2. When thou declinest in thy care to perform duties in a spiritual sort, and to preserve the sense of those more inward failings, which in duty none but thyself can check thee of. It is not frequency in duty, but spirituality in duty, causeth thriving; and therefore, neglect in this point soon brings grace into a consumptive pasture. Possibly, soul, the time was thou wert not satisfied with praying, but thou didst watch thy heart strictly (as a man would every piece in a sum of money he pays, lest he should wrong his friend with any brass or uncurrent coin); thou wouldst have God not only have duty, but duty stampt with that faith which makes it current, have that zeal and sincerity which makes it gospel-weight; but now thou art more careless and formal: Oh, look to it, poor soul, thou wilt, if thou continue thus careless, melt in thy spiritual estate apace: such dealings will spoil thy trade with heaven; God will not take off these slighty duties at thy hands.

3. When a Christian gets little spiritual nourishment from communion with God, to what he hath done. The time hath been (it may be) thou couldst shew what came of thy praying, hearing, and fasting; but now the case is altered. There is a double-strength communion which God imparts to a soul in a healthful disposition; strength to faith, and strength for our obediental walking. Dost thou hear and pray, and get no more strength to hold by a promise; no more power over, or brokenness of heart under thy usual corruptions? What, come down the mount, and break the tables of God's law as soon as thou art off the place? As deep in thy passion, uneven in thy course as before? There is a sure decay of that inward heat, which should and would (if in his right temper) suck some nourishment from these.

Thirdly, By thy behaviour in thy worldly employments.

1. When thy worldly occasions do not leave them in so free and spiritual a disposition, to return into the presence of God as formerly. May be thou couldst have come from thy shop and family employments to thy closet, and find that they have kept thee in frame, yea, may be, delivered thee in a better frame for those duties; but now 'tis otherwise; thou canst not so shake them off, but they cleave to thy spirit, and give an earthly savour to thy praying and hearing; thou hast reason to bewail it. When nature decays, men go more stooping; and 'tis a sign some such decay is in thee, that thou canst not, as thou usest, lift up thy heart from earthly

earthly to spiritual duties. They were intended as helps against temptation; and therefore when they prove snares to us, there is a distemper on us. If we wax worse after sleep, the body is not right, because the nature of sleep is to refresh; if exercise indisposeth for work, the reason is in our own bodies. So here:

2. When thy diligence in thy particular calling is more selfish. Possibly thou hast wrought in thy shop, and sat close at thy study, in obedience to the command chiefly; thy carnal interests have swayed but little with thee; but now thou tradest more for thyself, and less for God. Oh, have a care of this!

3. When thou canst not bear the disappointment of thy carnal ends in thy particular calling, as thou hast done. Thou workest and gettest little of the world, thou preachest and art not much esteemed, and thou knowest not well how to brook these. The time was thou couldst retire thyself into God, and make up all thou didst want elsewhere in him; but now thou art not so well satisfied with thy estate, rank and condition; thy heart is fingering for more of these than God allows thee; this shews declining. Children are harder to be pleased, and old men (whose decay of nature makes them more forward, and in a manner children the second time), than others. Labour, therefore, to recover thy decaying grace; and as this lock grows, so thy strength with it will, to acquiesce in the disposure of God's providence.

CHAP. IV.

A Word of Counsel for the Recovery of declining Grace.

WE come now to give a few directions to the Christian, how to recover decaying grace.

Inquire faithfully into the cause of thy declining. The Christian's armour decays two ways: Either by violent battery, when the Christian is overcome by temptation to sin; or else by neglecting to furbish and scour it with the use of those means, which are as oil to keep it clean and bright. Now inquire which of these have been the cause of thy decay: It is like, both concur.

First, if thy grace be weakened by any blow given it by any sin committed by thee; there then lies a threefold duty upon thee towards the recovery of it.

1. Thou art to renew thy repentance. It is Christ's counsel, Rev. ii. 5. to Ephesus, *Repent, and do thy first works:* where it is not only commanded as a duty, but prescribed as a means for her recovery; as if he had said, Repent, that thou mayest do thy first works. Lo, Hos. xiv. 2. the Lord sets back-sliding Israel about

about this work, bidding her, *take words, and turn to the Lord:* And verse 4. he then tells her he'll take her in hand to recover her of her sins, *I will heal their backslidings:* A repenting soul is under promise of healing. And therefore, Christian, go and search thy heart, as thou wouldst do thy house, if some thief or murderer lay hid in it to cut thy throat in the night; and when thou hast found the sin that has done thee the mischief, then labour to fill thy heart with shame for it, and indignation against it, and so go big with sorrow, and cast it forth before the Lord in a heart-breaking confession: Better thou do this, than satan do thy errand to God for thee.

2. When thou hast renewed thy repentance, forget not, delay not then to renew thy faith on the promise for pardon. Repentance, that is like purging physic to evacuate the peccant humours; but if faith come not presently with its restorative, the poor creature will never get heart, or recover his strength. A soul may die of a flux of sorrow as well of sin; faith hath an incarnating virtue, as they say of some strengthening meats; it feeds upon the promise, *and that is perfect, converting* (or rather restoring) *the soul*, Psal. xix. 7. Though thou wert pined to skin and bones, all thy strength wasted, yet faith would soon recruit thee, and enable every grace to perform its office cheerfully. Faith sucks peace from the promise, called *peace in believing;* from peace flows joy; *being justified by faith, we have peace with God*, Rom. v. i. and ver. 2. *We rejoice in hope of glory*, and joy affords strength; *the joy of the Lord is our strength.*

3. Back both these with a daily endeavour to mortify those lusts which most prevail over thy grace. Weeds cannot thrive, and the flowers also; when grace doth not act vigorously and freely, conclude it is opprest with some contrary lust, which weighs down its spirits, and makes them lumpish; even as superfluous humours do load the natural spirits in our bodies, that we have little joy to stir or go about any business till they be evacuated: and therefore ply this work close; it is not a day's work or two in the year, like physic at spring and fall: nothing more vain than to make a bustle, as the Papists do at their *Lent*, or as some unsound professors among ourselves, who seem to bestir themselves before a sacrament or day of fasting, with a great noise of zeal, and then let those very lusts live peaceably in them all the year after. No, this is child-play, to do and undo; thou must *mortify daily thy lusts by the spirit*, Rom. viii. 13. Follow but this work conscionably in thy Christian course, making it thy endeavour (as constantly as the labouring man goes out every day to work in the field where his calling lies) to watch thy heart, and use all means for the discovery of sin, and as it breaks forth to be humbled for it, and be chopping at the root of it with the axe of

mortification: and thou shalt see, by the blessing of God, what a change for the better there will be in the constitution of thy grace. Thou, who art now so poor, so pale, that thou art afraid to see thy own face long in the glass of thy own conscience, thou shalt then reflect with joy upon thy own conscience, and dare to converse with thyself, without those surprizals of horror and fear which before did appall thee. Thy grace, though it shall not be thy rejoicing, yet it will be thy evidence for Christ, in whom it is, and lead thee in with boldness to lay claim to him: while the loose Christian, whose grace is overgrown with lusts, for want of this weeding-hook, shall stand trembling at the door, questioning whether his grace be true or no, and from that doubt of his welcome.

Secondly, If, upon inquiry, thou findest that thy armour decays, rather for want of scouring, than by any blow from sin presumptuously committed (as that is most common and ordinary, rust will soon spoil the best armour, and negligence give grace its bane, as well as gross sins), then apply thyself to the use of those means which God hath appointed for the strengthening grace: If the fire goes out by taking off the wood, what may preserve it but by laying it on again?

1. I shall send thee to the Word of God; be more frequently conversant with it. David tells us where he renewed his spiritual life, and got his soul so oft into a heavenly heat, when grace in him began to chill: *The Word* (he tells us) *quickened him*; this was the sunny bank he sat under. The Word draws forth the Christian's grace, by presenting every one with an object suitable to act upon: this is of great power to rouse them up; as the coming of a friend makes us, though sleepy before, shake off all drowsiness, to enjoy his company. Affections, they are actuated when their object is before them; if we love a person, this is excited by sight of him; if we hate one, our blood riseth much more against him when before us. Now the Word brings the Christian's graces and their objects together. Here love may delight herself with the beholding Christ, who is set out to the life there in all his love and loveliness; here the Christian may see his sins in a glass that will not flatter him; and can there any godly sorrow be in the heart, any hatred of sin, and not come forth, while the man is reading what they cost Christ for him?

2. From the Word go to meditation; this is a bellows to the fire; that grace which lies choaked and eaten up for want of exercise, will by this be cleared and break forth; while thou art musing, this fire will burn, and thy heart grow hot within thee, according to the nature of the subject thy thoughts dwell upon.—Resolve, therefore, Christian, to enclose some time from all worldly suitors, wherein thou mayest every day, if possible, at least take a view of the most remarkable occurrences that have

passed

passed between God and thee: First, ask thy soul what takings it hath had that day, what mercies heaven hath sent in to thee; and do not, when thou hast asked the question (like Pilate), go out, but stay till thy soul has made report of God's gracious dealings with thee: and if thou beest wise to observe, and faithful to relate them, thy conscience must tell thee, that the cock was never turned, the breast of mercy never put up all the day; yea, while thou art viewing these fresh mercies, telling over this new coin, hot out of the mint of God's bounty, ancient mercies will come crowding in upon thee, and call for a place in thy thoughts, and tell thee what God hath done for thee months and years ago (and indeed old debts should not be paid last); give them, Christian, all a hearing one time or another, and thou shalt see how they will work upon thy ingenious spirit. It is with the Christian in this case, as with some merchant's servant that keeps his master's cash; he tells his master he hath a great sum of his by him, and desires he would discharge him of it, and see how his accounts stand; but he can never find him at leisure. There is a great treasure of mercy always in the Christian's hands, and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him, but seldom it is he can find time to tell his mercies over; and is it any wonder that such should go behindhand in their spiritual estate, who take no notice what the gracious dealings of God are with them? How can he be thankful that seldom thinks of what he receives? or patient when God afflicts, that wants one of the most powerful arguments to pacify a mutinous spirit in trouble, and that is taken from the abundant good we receive at the hands of the Lord, as well as a little evil? How can such a soul's love flame to God, that is kept at such a distance from the mercies of God, which are fuel to it? And the like may be said of all the other graces. Secondly, reflect upon thyself, and bestow a few serious thoughts upon thy behaviour, what it hath been, towards God and man all along the day. Ask thy soul, as Elisha his servant, Whence comest thou, O my my soul? Where hast thou been? What hast thou done for God this day, and how? And when thou goest about this, look that thou neither beest taken off from a thorough search, as Jacob was by Rachel's specious excuse, nor to be found to cocker thyself, as Eli his sons, when thou shalt upon inquiry take thy heart tardy in any point of duty: take heed what thou doest, for thou judgest for God, who receives the wrong by thy sin, and therefore will do himself justice if thou wilt not.

3. From meditation go to prayer; indeed, a soul in meditation is on his way to prayer; that duty leads the Christian to this, and this brings help to that; when the Christian has done his utmost by meditation to excite his graces, and chace his spirit into some

divine heat, he knows all this is but to lay the wood in order. The fire must come from above to kindle, and this must be fetched by prayer. They say stars have greatest influences when they are in conjunction with the sun; then sure the graces of a saint should never work more powerfully than in prayer, for then he is in the nearest conjunction and communion with God. That ordinance, which hath such power with God, must needs have a mighty influence on ourselves. It will not let God rest, but raiseth him up to his people's succour; and is it any wonder if it be a means to rouse up and excite the Christian's grace? How oft do we see a dark cloud upon David's spirit at the beginning of his prayer, which, by the time he is a little warm in his work, begins to clear up, and, before he ends, breaks forth into high actings of faith and acclamations of praise? Only here, Christian, take heed of formal praying: this is as baneful to grace as not praying. A plaister, though proper, and of sovereign virtue, yet, if it be laid on cold, may do more hurt than good.

4. To all the former, join fellowship and communion with the saints thou livest amongst. No wonder to hear a house is robbed that stands far from neighbours. He that walks in communion of saints, he travels in company, he dwells in a city where one house keeps up another, to which Jerusalem is compared. 'Tis observable, concerning the house in whose ruins Job's children were intombed, that a wind came from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of it; it seems it stood alone. The devil knows what he does in hindering this great ordinance of communion of saints; in doing this, he hinders the progress of grace, yea, brings that which Christians have into a declining wasting state. The apostle couples those two duties close together, *to hold fast our profession, and consider one another, and provoke unto love and to good works,* Heb. x. 23, 24. Indeed it is a dangerous step to apostasy to forsake the communion of saints; hence it is said of Demas, *He hath left us, and embraced the present world.* O, what mischief has satan done us in these few late years, in this one particular! What is become of this communion of saints? Where are there two or three to be found that can agree to walk together? Those that could formerly suffer together, cannot sit together at their Father's table, can hardly pray one with, or one for another; the breath of one Christian is strange to another that once lay in his bosom.—*This is a lamentation, and shall be for a lamentation.*

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Words opened, and what is meant by the Evil Day. That ye may be able to withstand in the Evil Day, and having done, &c.

WE come to the argument with which the apostle urgeth the exhortation, and that is double.

The first hath respect to the hour of battle, *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.*

The second relateth to the happy issue of the war, which will crown the Christian thus armed, and that is certain victory; *and having done all, to stand.*

First, Of the first, *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day.* But what is this evil day? Some take this evil day to comprehend the whole life of a Christian here below in this vale of tears; and then the argument runs thus: Take to yourselves the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to persevere to the end of your life, which you will find, as it were, one continued day of trouble and trial. Thus Jacob draws a black line over his whole life: *Few and evil have the days of my life been*, Gen. xlvii. What day shines so fair, that overcasts not before night, nay, in which the Christian meets not with some shower or other, enough to deserve the name of an evil day? Every day hath its portion, yea, proportion: *sufficient is the evil of the day.* We need not borrow and take up sorrows upon the use of the morrow, to make up our present load. As we read of daily bread, so of a daily cross, Luke ix. 24. which we are bid to take, not to make: we need not make crosses for ourselves, as we are prone to do: God in his providence will provide one for us; and we are bid to take it up, but we hear nothing of laying it down, till cross and we lie down together; our troubles and our lives are coetaneous, live and die together; here when joy comes, sorrow is at its heel; staff and rod go together: Job himself (whose prosperity the devil so grudged, and set forth in all his bravery and pomp, Job i. 10. as if his sun had no shadow), hear what account this good man gives of this his most flourishing time, chap. iii. 26. *I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet.* There were some troubles that broke his rest, when his bed was, to thinking, as soft as heart could wish; even now this good man tosses and tumbles from one side to the other, and is not quiet. If one should have come to Job, and blessed him with his happy condition, and said, Surely, Job, thou couldst be content with what thou hast for thy portion, if thou mightest have all this settled on thee, and thy heirs after thee: he would have said, as once Luther,

ther, That God should not put him off with these. Such is the saints state in this bottom, that their very life here, and all the pompous entertainments of it, they are all their cross, because they detain them from their crown. We need nothing to make our life an evil day, more than our absence from the chief good; which cannot be recompensed by the world, nor enjoyed with it. Only this goodness there is in this evil, that it is short; our life is but an evil day, it will not last long; and sure it was mercy that God hath abridged so much of the term of man's life in these last days, wherein so much of Christ and heaven are discovered, that it would have put the saint's patience hard to it, to have known so much of the upper world's glory, and then be kept so long from it, as the fathers in the first age were. O comfort one another, Christians, with this; though your life be evil with troubles, yet 'tis short; a few steps, and you are out of the rain. There is a great difference between a saint, in regard of the evils he meets with, and the wicked; as two travellers riding contrary ways (both taken in the rain and wet), but one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower; but the other rides into the rainy corner, so that the further he goes, the worse he is.—The saint, he meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower; when death comes, he has fair weather: But the wicked, the further he goes, the worse; what he meets with here, is but a few drops; the great storm is the last. The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting consciences.

Secondly, Others take the phrase in a more restrained sense, to denote those particular seasons of our life, wherein more especially we meet with afflictions and sufferings. Beza reads it, *tempore adverso*, in the time of our adversity. Though our whole life be evil, if compared with heaven's blissful state, our clearest day, night to that glorious morning; yet one part of our life, compared with another, may be called good, and the other evil; we have our vicissitudes here. The providences of God to his saints here, while on this low bottom of earth, are mixed and party-coloured, as was signified by the *speckled horses* in Zechariah's vision, Ezek. i. 8. Red and white, peace and war, joy and sorrow, chequer our days. Earth is a middle place betwixt heaven and hell, and so is our state here; it partakes of both; we go up hill and down hill, till we get to our journey's end; yea, we find the deepest slough nearest to our Father's house: death, I mean, into which all the other troubles of our life fall, as streams into some great river, and with which they all end, and are swallowed up. This being the comprehensive evil, I conceive,

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to be meant here, being made remarkable by a double article, *that* day, *that* evil day, not excluding those other days of tribulation which intervene. These are but so many petty deaths, every one snatching away a piece of our lives with them, or like pages sent before, to usher in this king of terrors that comes behind.

The phrase being opened, let us consider the strength of this first argument, with which the apostle reinforceth his exhortation, of taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, and that consists in three weighty circumstances.

First, The nature and quality of this day of affliction: it is an evil day.

Secondly, The unavoidableness of this evil day of affliction, implied in the form of speech, *That you may withstand in the evil day.* He shuts out all hope of escaping; as if he had said, You have no way but to withstand; please not yourselves with thoughts of shunning battle; the evil day must come, be you armed or not armed.

Thirdly, The necessity of this armour, *to withstand.* As we cannot run from it, so not bear up before it, and oppose the force which will be made against us, except clad with armour. These would afford several points; but, for brevity, we shall lay them together in one conclusion.

CHAP. VI.

Sheweth that the Day of Affliction is evil, and in what respects; as also unavoidable; and why to be prepared for.

Doct. IT behoves every one to arm and prepare himself for the evil day of affliction and death, which unavoidably he must conflict with. The point hath three branches.

First, The day of affliction and death is an evil day.

Secondly, This evil day is unavoidable.

Thirdly, It behoves every one to provide for this evil day.

First, Of the first branch.—The day of affliction, especially death, is an evil day. Here we must shew how affliction is evil, and how not.

1. It is not morally or intrinsically evil. If it were evil in this sense, first, God could not be the author of it; his nature is so pure, that no such evil can come from him, any more than the sun's light can make night. But this evil of affliction he voucheth for his own act: *Against this family do I devise an evil,* Micah

iii. 2. Yea, more, he impropriates it so to himself, as that he will not have us think any can do us evil beside himself. 'Tis the prerogative he glories in, that there is no evil in the city, but it is of his doing, Amos iii. 6. And well it is for the saints, that their crosses are all made in heaven; they would not else be so fitted to their backs as they are. But, for the evil of sin, he disowns it, with a strict charge, that we lay not this brat, which is begotten by satan, upon our impure hearts, at his door: *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempeth he any man*, Jam. i. 13.

2. If affliction were intrinsically evil, it could in no respect be the object of our desire, which sometimes it is and may be. We are to choose affliction, rather than sin, yea, the greatest affliction before the least sin. Moses chose affliction with the people of God, rather than the pleasures of sin for a season. We are bid to rejoice when we fall into divers temptations, that is, afflictions.

But in what respects then may the day of affliction be called evil?

1. As it is grievous to sense. In scripture, evil is oft put as contradistinct to joy and comfort: *We look for peace, and behold no good.* A merry heart is called a good heart; a sad spirit, an evil spirit; because nature hath an abhorrency to all that opposeth its joy, and this every affliction doth more or less. No affliction, while present, is joyous, but grievous, Heb. x. 11.: it hath, like physic, an unpleasing farewell to the sense. Therefore Solomon, speaking of the evil days of sickness, expresseth them to be so distasteful to nature, that we shall say, *We have no pleasure in them.* They take away the joy of our life. Natural joy it a true flower of the sun of prosperity; it opens and shuts with is. 'Tis true indeed, the saints never have more joy than in their affliction; but this comes in upon another score: they have a good God that sends it in, or else they would be as sadly on it as others. 'Tis no more natural for comfort to spring from afflictions, than for grapes to grow on thorns, or manna in the wilderness. The Israelites might have looked long enough for such bread, if heaven had not miraculously rained it down. God chooseth this season, to make the omnipotency of his love the more conspicuous: As Elijah, to add to the miracle, first caused water in abundance to be poured on the wood and sacrifice, so much as to fill the trench, and then brought fire from heaven by his prayer to lick it up.—Thus God pours out the flood of affliction upon his children, and then kindles that inward joy in their bosoms which licks up all their sorrow; yea, he makes the very waters of affliction they float on, add a further sweetness to the music of their spiritual joy; but still it is God that is good, and affliction that is evil.

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2. The day of affliction is an evil day, as it is an unwelcome remembrancer of what sinful evils have passed in our lives. It revives the memory of old sins, which, it may be, were buried many years ago in the grave of forgetfulness. The night of affliction is the time when such ghosts use to walk in men's consciences; and as the darkness of the night adds to the horror of any fearful object, so doth the state of affliction, which is itself uncomfortable, add to the terror of our sins then remembered.—Never did the patriarchs sin look so ghastly on them, as when it recoiled upon them in their distress, Gen. xlii. 21. The sinner then hath more real apprehensions of wrath than at another time: Affliction approximates judgment; yea, it is interpreted by him, as a pursuivant sent to call him presently before God, and therefore must beget a woeful confusion and consternation in his spirit. Oh that men would think of this, how they could bear the sight of their sins, and a rehearsal sermon of all their ways in that day! That is the blessed man indeed, who can with the prophet then look on them, and triumph over them. This indeed is a dark parable, as he calls it, few have skill of it; as, Psal. xlix. 4, 5. *I will open my dark saying upon the harp; wherefore should I fear in the day of evil, when the iniquity of my heels compasseth me about?*

3. The day of affliction makes discovery of much evil to be in the heart, which was not seen before. Affliction shakes and stirs the creature; if any sediment be at the bottom, it will appear then. Sometimes it discovers the heart to be quite naught, that before had some seeming good; these suds wash off the hypocrite's paint. When corrupt nature is vexed, it shews itself; and some afflictions do that to purpose. We read of such as are offended when persecution comes; they fall quite out with their profession, because it puts them to such cost and trouble; others, in their distress, that curse their God, Isa. viii. 21. It is impossible for a naughty heart to think well of an afflicting God.—The hireling, if his master takes up a staff to beat him, throws down his work and runs away; and so doth a false heart serve God. Yea, even where the person is gracious, corruption is oft found to be stronger, and graces weaker, than they were thought to be. Peter, who sets out so valiantly at first to walk on the sea, the wind doth but rise, and he begins to sink: Now he sees there was more unbelief in his heart than he before suspected.—Sharp afflictions are to the soul, as a driving rain to the house: We know not that there are such crannies and holes in the house, till we see it drop down here and there. Thus we perceive not how unmortified this corruption, not how weak that grace is, till we are thus searched, and made more fully to know what is in our hearts by such trials. This is the reason why none have such

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humble thoughts of themselves, and such pitiful and forbearing thoughts towards others in their infirmities, as those who are most acquainted with afflictions; they meet with so many foils in their conflicts, as make them carry a low sail in respect of their own grace, and a tender respect to their brethren, more ready to pity than censure them in their weaknesses.

4. This is the season when the evil one satan comes to tempt. What we find called the time of tribulation, Matt. xiii. 22. we find in the same parable, Luke viii. 13. called the time of temptation. Indeed they both meet; seldom doth God afflict us, but satan addeth temptation to our wilderness: *This is your hour* (saith Christ), *and the power of darkness*, Luke xxii. 53.—Christ's sufferings from man, and the temptation from the devil, came together. Esau, who hated his brother for the blessing, said in his heart, *The days of mourning for my father are at hand, then will I kill my brother*, Gen. xxviii. 41. Times of affliction are the days of mourning; those satan waits for to do us mischief in.

Lastly, The day of affliction hath oft an evil event and issue, and in this respect proves an evil day indeed. All is well, we say, that ends well; the product of afflictions on the Christian is good; the rod with which they are corrected yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and therefore they can call their afflictions good; that is a good instrument that lets out only the bad blood. *It was good for me that I was afflicted*, saith David. I have read of a holy woman, who used to compare her afflictions to her children; they both put her to great pain in bearing; but as she knew not which of her children to have been without (for all the trouble in the bringing forth), so neither which of her afflictions she could have missed, notwithstanding the sorrow they put her to in the enduring. But to the wicked the issue is sad; first, in regard of sin, they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened in sin, and outrageous in their wicked practices. Every plague in Egypt added to the plague of hardness in Pharaoh's heart: He that for some while could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass, that he threatens to kill himself, if he came to him any more. Oh, how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when they once get off their clog and chain from their heels! When physic works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions, by the breaking out of their lusts afterwards. Secondly, In regard of sorrow; every affliction on a wicked person produceth another, and that a greater than itself: The greatest wedge comes at last, which will cleave him fit for the fire. The sinner is whipt from affliction to affliction, as the vagrant from constable

constable to constable, till at last he comes to hell, his proper place and settled abode, where all sorrows will meet in one that is endless.

Secondly, The second branch of the point follows. This evil day is unavoidable. We may as well stop the chariot of the sun, when posting to night, and chace away the shades of the evening, as escape the hour of darkness that is coming upon us all. *None hath power over the spirit to retain it, neither hath he power in the day of death; and there is no discharge in that war,* Eccl. viii. 8. Among men 'tis possible to get off when pressed for the wars, by pleading privilege of years, estate, weakness of body, protection from the prince, and the like; or if all these fail, possibly the sending another in our room, or a bribe given in the hand, may serve the turn. But in this war, the press is so strict, that there is no dispensation. David would willingly have gone for his son; we hear him crying, *Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!* But he will not be taken, that young gallant must go himself. We must in our own person come into the field, and look death in the face. Some indeed we find so fond, as to promise themselves immunity from this day, as if they had an insuring-office in their breast: They say they have made a covenant with death, and with hell they are at an agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto them. And now, like debtors, they have feed the serjeant, they walk abroad boldly, and fear no arrest. But God tells them, as fast as they bind, he will loose: *Your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand.*— And how should it, if God will not set his seal to it? There is a divine law for this evil day, which came in force upon Adam's first sin; that laid the fatal knife to the throat of mankind, which hath opened a sluice to let out his heart-blood ever since. God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very constitution and nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves, as from death. We need no feller to come with a hand of violence and hew us down; there is in the tree a worm, which grows out of its own substance, that will destroy it; so in us, those infirmities of nature that will bring us down to the dust. Our death was bred, when our life was first conceived; and as a breeding woman cannot hinder the hour of her travail, that follows in nature upon the other, so neither can man hinder the bringing forth of death, with which his life is big. All the pains and aches man feels in his life, are but so many groans of dying nature; they tell him his dissolution is at hand. Beest thou a prince sitting in all thy state and pomp, death dare enter thy palace, and come through all thy guards, to deliver the fatal message it hath from God to thee; yea, run its dagger to thy heart. Wert thou compassed

passed with a college of doctors, consulting thy health, art and nature both must deliver thee np when that comes. Even when thy strength is firmest, and thou eatest thy bread with a merry heart, that very food which nourisheth thy life, gives thee withal an earnest of thy death, as it leaves those dregs in thee which will in time procure the same. O! how unavoidable must this evil day of death be, when that very staff knocks us down to the grave at last, which our life leans on, and is preserved by! God owes a debt both to the first Adam, and second: To the first he owes the wages of his sin; to the second, the reward of his sufferings. The place for full payment of both, is the other world; so that except death comes to convey man thither, the wicked, who are the posterity of the first Adam, will miss of that full pay for their sins, which the threatening makes due debt, and engageth God to perform; the godly also, who are the seed of Christ, these shall not receive the whole purchase of his blood, which he would never have shed but upon the credit of that promise of eternal life, which God gave him for them before the world began: This is the reason why God hath made this day so sure; in it he dischargeth both bonds.

Thirdly, The third branch of the point follows, that it behoves every one to prepare, and effectually to provide for this evil day, which so unavoidably impends us: And that upon a twofold account: First, in point of duty; Secondly, in point of wisdom.

First, In point of duty. 1. It is upon our allegiance to the great God, that we provide and arm ourselves against this day. Suppose a subject were trusted with one of his prince's castles, and this man should hear that a puissant enemy was coming to lay siege to this castle, yet takes no care to lay in arms and provision for his defence, and so 'tis lost; how could such a one be cleared of treason? Doth he not basely betray the place, and with it his prince's honour into the enemy's hand? Our souls are this castle, which we are every one to keep for God: we have certain intelligence that satan hath a design upon them, and the time when he intends to come with all his power of darkness, to be that evil day. Now as we should be found true to our trust, we are obliged to stand upon our defence, and store ourselves with what may enable us to make a vigorous resistance. 2. We are obliged to provide for that day, as a suitable return for, and improvement of, the opportunities and means which God affords us for this very end. We cannot, without shameful ingratitude to God, make waste of those helps God gives us in order to this great work. Every one would cry out upon him that should basely spend that money upon riot in prison, which was sent him to procure his deliverance out of prison: And do we not blush

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to bestow those talents upon our lusts and satan, which God graciously indulgeth to deliver us from them, and his rage in a dying hour? What have we bibles for, ministers and preaching for, if we mean not to furnish ourselves by them with armour for the evil day? In a word, what is the intent of God in lengthening out our days, and continuing us some while here in the land of the living? Was it that we might have time to revel or rather ravel out upon the pleasure of this vain world? Doth he give us our precious time to be employed in catching such butterflies as these earthly honours and riches are? It cannot be. Masters do not use (if wise) to set their servants about such work as will not pay for the candle they burn in doing it. And truly nothing less than the glorifying of God, and saving our souls at last, can be worth the precious time we spend here. The great God hath a greater end than most men think in this dispensation. If we would judge aright, we should take his own interpretation of his actions; and the apostle Peter bids us *count that the long-suffering of the Lord is salvation,* 2 Pet. iii. 15. which place he quotes out of Paul, as to the sense, though not in the same form of words, which in Rom. ii. 4. are these, *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?* From both places we are taught what is the mind of God, and the language he speaks to us in by every moment's patience, and inch of time that is granted to us. It is a space given for repentance.—God sees (as we are) death and judgment could bring no good news to us, we are in no case to welcome the evil day; and therefore mercy stands up to plead for the poor creature in God's bosom, and begs a little time more may be added to his life, that by this indulgence it may be provoked to repent before he be called to the bar. Thus we come by every day that is continually super-added to our time on earth. And doth not this lay a strong obligation on us to lay out every point of this time unto the same end 'tis begged for?

Secondly, In point of wisdom. The wisdom of a man appears most eminently in two things. 1. In the matter of his choice and chief care. 2. In a due time of this his choice and care.

1. A wise man makes choice of that for the subject of his chief care and endeavour, which is of the greatest importance and consequence to him: fools and children only are intent about toys and trifles; they are as busy and earnest in making of a house of dirt or cards, as Solomon was in making of his temple. Those poor babes are as adequate to their foolish apprehensions, as great enterprises are to wise men. Now such is the importance of the evil day, especially that of death, that it proves a man a fool, or wise, as he comports himself to it. The end specifies every action,

tion, and gives it the name of good or evil, of wise or foolish.—The evil day of death is, as the end of our days, so to be the end of all the actions of our life. Such will our life be found at last, as it hath been in order to this one day. If the several items of our life, counsels and projects that we have pursued, when they shall then be cast up, will amount to a blessed death, then we shall appear to be wise men indeed: But if after all our goodly plots and policies for other things, we be unprovided for that hour, we must be content to die fools at last; and no such fool as the dying fool. The Christian goes for the fool (in the world's account) while he lives; but when death comes, the wise world will then confess they miscalled him, and shall take it to themselves: *We fools counted his life to be madness, and his end to be without honour: But how he is now numbered among the children of God, and his lot among the saints! therefore have we erred from the way of truth*, Wisd. v. 4, 5. The place is apocryphal, but sinners will find the matter of it canonical. 'Tis true indeed, saints are outwitted by the world in the things of the world, and no marvel; neither doth it impeach their wisdom any more, than it doth a scholar's, to be excelled by the cobler in his mean trade. Nature, where it intends higher excellencies, is more careless in those things that are inferior; as we see in man, who, being made to excel the beasts in a rational soul, is himself excelled by some beast or other in all his senses. Thus the Christian may well be surpassed in matters of worldly commerce, because he hath a nobler object in his eye, that makes him converse with the things of the world in a kind of non-attendance; he is not much careful in these matters; if he can die well at last, and be justified for a wise man at the day of the resurrection, all is well; he thinks it not manners to be unwilling to stay so long for the clearing of his wisdom, as God can wait for the vindication of his own glorious nature, which will not appear in its glory till that day, when he will convince the ungodly of their hard thoughts and speeches of him, Jude ii. 15. Then they shall, till then they will not be convinced.

2. A wise man labours duly to time his care and endeavour for the attaining of what he proposeth. 'Tis the fool that comes when the market is done. As the evil day is of great concernment in respect of its event, so the placing of our care for it in the right season, is of chief importance, and that sure must be before it comes. There are more doors than one, at which the messenger may enter that brings evil tidings to us, and at which he will knock we know not; we know not where we shall be arrested, whether at bed or board, whether at home or in the field, whether among our friends, that will counsel and comfort us, or among our enemies, that will add weight to our sorrow by their cruelty.

cruelty. We know not when, whether by day or night (many of us), nor whether in the morning, noon, or evening of our age.—As he calls to work at all times of the day, so he doth to bed; may be while thou art praying or preaching, and it would be sad to go away prophaning them and the name of God in them; possibly when thou art about worse work, death may strike thy quaffing cup out of thy hand, while thou art sitting in the ale-house with thy jovial mates, or meet thee as thou art reeling home, and make some ditch thy grave, that as thou livedst like a beast, so thou shouldst die like a beast. In a word, we know not the kind of evil God will use as the instrument to stab us; whether some bloody hand of violence shall do it, or a disease out of our bowels and bodies; whether some acute disease, or some lingering sickness; whether such a sickness as shall slay the man while the body is alive (I mean, take the head, and deprive us of our reason), or not; whether such noisome troubles as shall make our friends afraid to let us breathe on them, or themselves look on us; whether they shall be afflictions aggravated with satan's temptations, and the terrors of our own affrighted consciences, or not. Who knows where, when, or what the evil day shall be? Therefore doth God conceal these, that we should prepare for all. Cæsar would never let his soldiers know when or whither he meant to march. The knowing of these would torment us with distracting fear; the not knowing them should awaken us to a providing care. It is an ill time to caulk the ship when at sea, tumbling up and down in a storm; this should have been looked to when on her seat in the harbour. And as bad it is to begin to trim a soul for heaven, when tossing on a sick bed. Things that are done in a hurry, are seldom done well: a man called out of his bed at midnight, with a dismal fire on his house-top, cannot stand to dress himself in order, as at another time, but runs down with one stocking half on, may be, and the other not on at all.—Those poor creatures, I am afraid, go in as ill a dress into another world, who begin to provide for it when on a dying bed: conscience calls them up with a cry of hell-fire in their bosoms; but alas! they must go, though they have not time to put their armour on; and so they are put to repent at leisure in hell, for their shuffling up a repentance in haste here. We come to the application of the point.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

The Application of the Point.

Use 1. FIRST, It reproves those that are so far from providing for the evil day, that they will not suffer any thoughts of that day to stay with them; they are as unwilling to be led into a discourse of this subject, as a child is to be carried into the dark, and there left: It is a death to them to think of death, or that which leads to it. As some foolishly think, they must needs die presently when they have made their will, so these think they hasten that sorrowful day by musing on it. The meditation of it is no more welcome to them, than the company of Moses was to Pharaoh: Therefore they say to it, as he to Moses, *Get thee from me, and let me see thy face no more.* The fear of it makes them to butcher and make away all those thoughts which conscience stirs up concerning it: And at last they get such a mastery of their consciences, that they arrive to a kind of atheism; it is as rare to have them think or speak of such matters, as to see a fly busy in winter: Nothing now but what is frolic and jocund, is entertained by them. If any such thoughts come as prophecy mirth, and carnal content, these, as right with their hearts, are taken up into the chariot to sit with them, but all other are commanded to go behind. Alas, poor-spirited wretches! something might be said for you, if this evil day of death and judgment were such *entia rationis* as had no foundation, or being but what our fancies give them. Such troubles there are in the world, which have all their evil from our thoughts; when we are disquieted with the scorns and reproaches of men, did we but not think of them, they were nothing; but thy banishing the thoughts of this evil day from thy mind, will be a poor short relief. Thou canst neither hinder its coming, nor take away its sting when it comes, by the slighting it. Thou art like a passenger in a ship, sleep or awake, thou art going thy voyage. Thou dost but like that silly bird, who puts her head into a reed, and then thinks she is safe from the fowler, because she sees him not. Thou art a fair mark for God's vengeance; he sees thee, and is taking his aim at thee, when thou seest not him; yea, thou puttest thyself under an inevitable necessity of perishing, by not thinking of this day. The first step to our safety is, consideration of our danger.

Use 2. It reproves those, who, if they think of the evil day, yet it is so far off, that it is to little purpose. They will be sure to set it at such a distance from them, as shall take away the force of the meditation, that it shall not strike them down in the deep

sense

sense and fear of it. That cannon, which, if we stood at the mouth of it, would shatter us limb from limb, will not so much as scare them that get out of its reach. The further we put the evil day, the weaker impression it makes on us. 'Tis true, say sinners, it cannot be helped, we owe a debt to nature, it must be paid: Sickness will come, and death follow on that, and judgment brings up the rear of both. But alas! they look not for these guests yet, they prophecy of these things a great while hence to come; many a fair day they hope will intervene. Thus, men are very kind to themselves: First, they wish it may be long before it comes; and then, because they would have it so; and when once they have made this promise, no wonder if they then live after the rate of their vain hopes, putting off the stating of their accounts, till the winter-evening of old age, when they shall not have such allurement to gad abroad among the pleasures of this life: O then they will do great matters to fit them for the evil day. Bold man! who gave thee leave to cut out such large thongs of that time which is not thine, but God's? Who makes the lease, the tenant, or the landlord? Or dost thou forget thou farmest thy life, and art not an owner? This is the device of satan, to make you delay; whereas a present expectation of the evil day, would not let you sit still unprepared. Oh, why do you let your souls from their work, make them idle and rest from their burdens, by telling them of long life, while death chops in upon you unawares? Oh, what shame will your whorish hearts be put to, that now say, your husband is gone afar off, you may fill yourselves with loves; if he should come before he is looked for, and find you in bed with your lusts? And let me tell you, sudden destruction is threatened, especially to such secure ones. Read Matt. xxiv. 48, 50, 51. where 'tis denounced against that sort of sinners, who please themselves with their Lord's delaying his coming, That *the Lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.* Indeed God must go out of his ordinary road of dealing with sinners, if such escape a sudden ruin. One is bold to challenge any to shew a precedent in scripture of any that are branded for security, that some remarkable, yea, sudden judgment did not surprise. Sodom, how soon after a sun-shine morning did the heavens thicken, and bury them in a few hours, by a storm of fire, in their own ashes? Careless Laish, cut off, before they almost think of it. Agag, when he saw the clouds of his fears break, and fair weather was in his countenance, they return immediately upon him, and shut him up in death; he is presently hewn in pieces. Amalek, slaughtered by David, before the triumph of their late victory was cold. Nebuchadnezzar strutting himself in his palace, with this bravado in his mouth, *Is not this great*

Babylon, which I have built? And before he can get the words out of his throat, there is another voice, falling from heaven, saying, *O King, to thee be it spoken, thy kingdom is departed from thee*, Dan. iv. 31—33. *And the same hour it was fulfilled*, and he sent to graze with the beasts. Dives blessing himself for many years, and within a few hours the pillow is plucked from under his head, and you hear no more of him, till out of hell he roar.—Yea, a whole world (few persons excepted) drowned, and they not know till the day the flood came, Matt. xxiv. 39. and swept them all away. And who art thou, O man, that promisest thyself an exemption, when kings, cities, a whole world, have been ruined after this sort?

Use 3. This reproves those who indeed think oft of this evil day, much against their will, by reason of an awakened conscience, that is ever pinching of them, and preaching on Paul's text (before Felix) to them, till it makes them tremble, as he did; yet such is the power of lusts in their hearts, that it makes them spur on, notwithstanding all the rebukes conscience gives them, and affrighting thoughts they have of the evil day; yet they continue in their old trade of sin desperately. The secure sinner, that has broke prison from his conscience, is like a strong-brained drunkard, he swallows down his sin, as the other does his drink, with pleasure, and is not stirred at all. But here is a man that is stomach-sick (as I may so say), his conscience is oft disgorging his sweet draughts, and yet he will sin, though with pain and anguish. Oh consider, poor wretches, what you do; instead of arming yourselves against the evil day, you arm the evil day against yourselves; you are sticking the bed with pins and needles, on which you must ere long be laid; you are throwing billets into that fiery furnace, wherein at last you shall be cast: And all this, in spite of your consciences, which yet God mercifully sets in your way, that the prickings of them may be as a hedge of thorns, to keep thee from the pursuit of thy lusts. Know therefore, if thou wilt go on, that as thy conscience takes from the pleasures of thy sin at present, so it will add to the horror of thy torment hereafter.

Use 4. It reproves those, who, though they are not so violent and outrageous in sin, to make them stink above ground in the nostrils of others, yet rest in an unarmed condition; they do not fly to Christ for covering and shelter, against this day of storm and tempest; and the reason is, they have a lie in their right hand, they feed on ashes, and a deceived heart carries them aside from seeking after Christ. It would make one tremble to see how confident many are with their false hopes and self-confidences, daring to come up (as Korah with his censer, as undauntedly as Moses himself) even to the mouth of the grave, till on a sudden they

they are swallowed up with destruction, and sent to be undeceived in hell, who would not be beaten from their refuge of lies here. Whoever thou art, O man, and whatever thou hast to glory in, were it to the most saint-like conversation that ever any lived on earth, yet if this be thy shelter against the evil day, thou wilt perish. No salvation when that flood comes, but Christ; yea, being in Christ, hanging on the outside of the ark by a specious profession, will not save. Methinks I see how those of the old world ran for their lives, some to this hill, and others to that high tree, and how the waves pursued them, till at last they were swept into the devouring flood. Such will your end be, that turn any other way for help than to Christ; yet the ark waits on you, yea, comes up close to your gate to take you in. Noah did not put forth his hand more willingly to take in the dove, than Christ doth to receive those who fly to him for refuge. Oh, reject not your own mercies for lying vanity!

Let this put thee upon the enquiry, whoever thou art, Whether thou beest in a posture of defence for this evil day? Ask thy soul, soberly and solemnly, Art thou provided for this day, this evil day? How couldst thou part with what that will take away, and welcome what it will certainly bring? Death comes with a voider to carry away all thy carnal enjoyments, and to bring thee up a reckoning for them. Oh, canst thou take thy leave of the one, and with peace and confidence read the other? Will it not affright thee to have thy health and strength turned into faintness and feebleness; thy sweet nights of rest, into waking eyes, and restless tossings up and down; thy voice, that has so often chaunted to the viol, to be now acquainted with no other tune but sighs and groans? Oh, how canst thou look upon thy sweet and dear relations, with thoughts of removing from them; yea, behold the instrument, as it were, whetting, that shall give the fatal stroke to sever soul and body? Think that thou wert now half dead in thy members, that are most remote from the fountain of life, and death to have but a few moments journey before it arrive to thy heart, and so beat the last breath out of thy body. Possibly the inevitable necessity of these do make thee to harden thyself against them; this might indeed, in some heathen that is not resolved whether there be another world or no, help a little to blunt the edge of that terror, which otherwise would cut deeper into his amazed heart. But if thou believest another world, and that judgment which stands at death's back, ready to allot thee thy unchangeable state in bliss or misery; surely thou canst not relieve thy awakened conscience with such a poor cordial. Oh, therefore, think what answer thou meanest to give unto the great God, at thy appearing before him, when he shall ask thee, What canst thou say, why the sentence of

eternal damnation should not then be pronounced against thee? Truly, we deal unfaithfully with our own souls, if we bring not our thoughts to this issue.' If now you should ask, How you should provide against the evil day, so that you may stand before that dreadful bar, and live so, in the mean time, that you might not be under a slavish bondage, through the fearful expectation of it; take it in a few directions.

First, If ever you would have a blessed issue of this evil day, so as to stand in judgment before the great God, rest not till thou hast got into a covenant-relation with Christ. Dying David's living comfort was drawn from the covenant God had made with him; this was all his desire and all his salvation. How canst thou put thy head into the other world without horror, if thou hast not solid ground that Christ will own thee for his? Heaven hath its proper heirs, and so hath hell. The heirs of heaven are such as are in covenant with God: the foundation of it was laid in a covenant, and all the mansions there are prepared for a people in covenant with him: *Gather my saints together that have made a covenant with me.* But how mayest thou get into this covenant-relation? First, break thy covenant with sin. Thou art by nature a covenant-servant to sin and satan; may be thou hast not expressly, in words and formally, as witches, sealed this covenant, yet, virtually, as thou hast done the work of satan, and been at the command of thy lusts, accepting the reward of unrighteousness (the pleasure and carnal advantages they have paid thee in for the same), therein thou hast declared thyself to be so. Now if ever thou wilt be taken into covenant with God, break this: a covenant with hell and heaven cannot stand together.

Secondly, Betroth thyself to Christ. The covenant of grace is the jointure which God settles only upon Christ's spouse. Rebecca had not the jewels and costly raiment, till she was promised to become Isaac's wife, Gen. xxiv. 53. *All the promises are yea and amen in Christ.* If once thou receivest Christ, with him thou receivest them. He that owns the tree, hath right to all the fruit that is on it. Now that thou mayest not huddle up a marriage between Christ and thee, so as to be disowned of Christ, and it prove a nullity at last; it behoves thee to look to it, that there be found in thee what Christ expects in every soul that he espouseth. First, therefore, consider whether thou canst heartily love the person of Christ. Look wishfully on him again and again, as he is set forth in all his spiritual excellencies; are they such as thy heart can close with? Doth his holy nature, and all those heavenly graces with which he is beautified, render him desirable to thee? Or couldst thou like him better if he were not so precise and exactly holy? Yea, is thy heart so inflamed with a desire of him, that thou canst love him with a conjugal love? A woman

may

may love one as a friend, whom she cannot love so as to make him her husband. A friendly love may stand with a love of some other equal to it, yea, superior; but a conjugal love is such as will bear neither. Canst thou find in thy heart to forsake all other, and cleave to Christ? Does thy heart speak thee ready, and present thee willing, to go with thy sweet Jesus, though he carry thee from father and mother's house? Is thy confidence such of his power to protect thee from all thy enemies, sin, wrath, and hell, that thou canst resolvedly put the life of thy soul into his hands, and be saved by the sole virtue of his blood, and his omnipotent arm; and of his care to provide for thee in this life and the other, that thou canst acquiesce in what he promiseth to do for thee? In a word, if thou hast Christ, thou must not only love him, but, for his sake, all thy new kindred, which by thy marriage to him thou shalt be allied unto. How canst thou like to call the saints thy brethren? Canst thou love them heartily, and forget all the old grudges thou hast had against them? Some of them thou wilt find poor and persecuted, yet Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, neither must thou. If thou findest thy heart now in such a disposition as suits these interrogatories, I dare not deny the banns, yea, I dare not but pronounce Christ and thee husband and wife. Go, poor soul (if I may call so glorious a bride poor), go, and comfort thyself with the expectation of thy Bridegroom's coming for thee; and when the evil day approaches, and death itself draws nigh, look not now with terror upon it, but rather revive with old Jacob, to see the chariot which shall carry thee over unto the embraces of thy Husband, whom thou bearest to be in so great honour and majesty in heaven, as may assure thee he is able to make thee welcome when thou comest there.—Amongst the *all things* which are ours by being Christ's, the apostle forgets not to name this to be one, *death is ours:* And well he did so, or else we should never have looked upon it as a gift, but rather as a judgment. Now, soul, thou art out of any danger of hurt that the evil day can do thee. Yet there remains something for thee to do, that thou mayest walk in the comfortable expectation of the evil day. We see that gracious persons may, for want of a holy care, fall into such distempers, as may put a sting into their thoughts of the evil day. David, that at one time would not fear *to walk in the valley of the shadow of death*, is so affrighted at another time, when he is led towards it, that he cries, *Spare me, O Lord, that I recover my strength, before I go hence*, Psal. xxxix. The child, though he loves his father, may do that which may make him afraid to go home. Now, Christian, if thou wouldst live in a comfortable expectation of the evil day,

First, Labour to die to this life, and the enjoyments of it every

day more and more. Death is not so strong to him, whose natural strength has been wasted by long pining sickness, as it is to him that lies but a few days, and has strength of nature to make great resistance. Truly thus it is here, that Christian, whose love to this life, and the contents of it, hath been for many years consuming and dying, will with more facility part with them, than he whose love is stronger to them. All Christians are not mortified in the same degree to the world. Paul tells us he died daily, he was ever sending more and more of his heart out of the world, so that by that time he came to die, all his affections were packed up and gone, which made him the more ready to follow, *speydomai, I am ready to be offered up*, 2 Tim. iv. 6. If it be but a tooth to pull out, the faster it stands, the more pain we have to draw it. O loosen the roots of thy affections from the world, and the tree will fall more easily.

Secondly, Be careful to approve thyself with diligence and faithfulness to God in thy place and calling. The clearer thou standest in thy own thoughts, concerning the uprightness of thy heart in the tenor of thy Christian course, the more composure thou wilt have when the evil day comes. *I beseech thee, O Lord,* (said good Hezekiah, at the point of death, as he thought,) *remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight.*— This cannot be our confidence, but it will be a better companion than a scolding conscience: If the blood be bad, the spirits will be tainted also; the more our life hath been corrupted with hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, the weaker our faith will be in a dying hour. There is great difference between two children that come home at night, one from the field, where he hath been diligent and faithful about his father's work, and another that hath played the truant a great part of the day; the former comes in confidently to stand before his father, the other sneaks to bed, and is afraid his father should see him, or ask him where he hath been. O, sirs, look to your walking: These have been trying times as ever came to England; it has required more care and courage to keep sincerity than formerly. And that is the reason why it is so rare to find Christians, especially those whose place and calling hath been more in the wind of temptation, go off and stage at death with such a *plaudite* of inward peace in their bosoms.

Thirdly, Familiarize the thoughts of the evil day to thy soul; handle this serpent often, walk daily in the serious meditations of it, do not run from them because they are unpleasing to flesh, that is the way to increase the terror of it. Do with your souls, when shy of, and scared with the thoughts of affliction or death, as you use to do with your beast that is given to boggle and start as you ride on him; when he flies back and starts at a thing, you do not yield

yield to his fear and go back, that will make him worse another time, but you ride him close up to that which he is afraid of, and in time you break him of that quality. The evil day is not such a scareful thing to thee that art a Christian, as thou shouldst start for it. Bring up thy heart close to it; shew thy soul what Christ hath done to take the sting out of it; what the sweet promises are that are given on purpose to overcome the fear of it, and what thy hopes are thou shalt get by it. These will satisfy and compose thy spirit, whereas the shunning the thoughts of it will but increase thy fear, and bring thee more into bondage to it.

CHAP. VIII.

The Second Argument with which the Exhortation is pressed, drawn from the assured Victory which shall crown the Soul's Conflict, if in this Armour; where several Points couched in the Argument are briefly handled.

WE come now to the second argument the apostle useth, further to press the exhortation; and that is taken from the glorious victory which hovers over the heads of believers while in the fight, and shall surely crown them in the end; this is held forth in these words, *And having done all, to stand.* The phrase is short, but full.

SECT. I.—First observe, heaven is not won with good words and a fair profession: *Having done all.* The doing Christian is the man that shall stand, when the empty boaster of his faith shall fall. The great talkers of religion are oft the least doers. His religion is in vain, whose profession brings no letters testimonial from a holy life. Sacrifice without obedience is sacrilege. Such rob God of that which he makes most account of. A great captain once smote one of his soldiers for railing at his enemy, saying, That he called him not to rail on him, but to fight against him, and kill him. 'Tis not crying out upon the devil, and declaiming against sin in prayer or discourse, but fighting and mortifying it, that God looks chiefly upon; such a one else doth but beat the air, there are no marks to be seen on his flesh and unmortified lusts that he hath fought. Paul was in earnest, he left a witness upon his body, made black and blue with the strokes of mortification. It was not a little vapouring in sight of the Philistines that got David his wife, but shedding their blood: and is it so small a matter to be son to the King of heaven, that thou

thinkest to obtain it without giving a real proof of thy zeal for God, and hatred to sin? *Not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work: this man* (saith the apostle) *shall be blessed in his deed,* Jam. i. 25. Mark, not by his deed but in his deed; he shall meet blessedness in that way of obedience he walks in. The empty professor disappoints others, who, seeing his leaves, expects fruit, but finds none; and at last he disappoints himself, he thinks to reach heaven, but shall miss of it. Tertullian speaks of some that think, *Satis Deum habere, si corde & animo suspiciatur, licet actu minus fiat:* God hath enough, (they think), if he be feared and reverenced in their hearts, though in their actions they shew it not so much, and therefore they can sin, and believe in God, and fear him never the worse: this (saith he) is to play the adulteress, and yet be chaste; to prepare poison for one's father, and yet be dutiful; but let such know, (saith the same father,) that if they can sin and believe, God will pardon them with a contradiction also: he'll forgive them, but they shall be turned into hell for all that. As ever you would stand at last, look you be found doing the work your Lord hath left you to make up, and trust not to lying words, as the prophet speaks, Jer. vii.

SECT. II.—*Doct.* 2. Secondly observe, That such is the mercy of God in Christ to his children, that he accepts their weak endeavours, joined with sincerity and perseverance in his service, as if they were full obedience, and therefore they are here said to have *done all.* O, who would not serve such a Lord! You hear servants sometimes complain of their masters to be so rigid and strict, that they can never please them; no, not when they do their utmost: But this cannot be charged upon God.—Be but so faithful as to do thy best, and God is so gracious that he will pardon thy worst. David knew this gospel indulgence, when he said, *Then I shall not be ashamed when I have respect to all thy commandments,* Psal. cxix. 6. when my eye is to all thy commandments. The traveller hath his eye on or towards the place he is going, though he be but yet short of it; there he would be, and is putting on all he can to reach it: So stands the saint's heart to all the commands of God; he presseth on to come nearer and nearer to full obedience; such a soul shall never be put to shame.—But wo to those that cover their sloth with the name of infirmity, yea, that spend their zeal and strength in the pursuit of the world of their lusts, and then think to make all up when charged therewith, That it is their infirmity, and they can serve God no better. These do by God, as those two by their prince (Francis the first of France) who cut off their right-hand one for another, and then made an excuse they were lame, and so could not serve in his galleys, for which they were sent to the gallows. Thus many will be found at last to have disabled themselves, by refusing

ing that help the spirit hath offered to them; yea, wasted what they had given them, and so shall be rewarded for hypocrites as they are. God knows how to distinguish between the sincerity of a saint, in the midst of his infirmities, and the shifts of a false heart. But we will wave these, and briefly speak to four points, which lie clearly in the words.

First, Here is the necessity of perseverance, *Having done all.*

Secondly, Here is the necessity of divine armour, to persevere till we have done all. Wherefore else bids he them take this armour for this end, if they could do it without?

Thirdly, Here is the certainty of persevering and overcoming at last, if clad with this armour, else it were small encouragement to bid them take that armour which would not surely defend them.

Fourthly, Here is the blessed result of the saints perseverance propounded, as that which will abundantly recompence all their pain and patience in the war, *having done all, to stand.* From these follow four distinct points.

First, He that will be Christ's soldier must persevere.

Secondly, There can be no perseverance without true grace in the heart.

Thirdly, Where true grace is, that soul shall persevere.

Fourthly, To stand at the end of this war, will abundantly recompence all our hazard and hardship endured in the war.

SECT. III.—*Doct.* 1. He that will be Christ's soldier, must persevere to the end of his life in this war against satan. This *having done all,* comes in after our conflict with death: *That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day:* Then follows, *And having done all.* We have not done all 'till that pitched battle be fought. *The last enemy is death.* The word *Katergazestai,* imports as much as to finish a business, and bring a matter to a full issue; so Phil. ii. 12. where we translate it well, *work out your salvation;* that is, perfect it, be not Christians by halves, but go through with it; the thorough Christian is the true Christian. Not he that takes the field, but he that keeps the field; not he that sets out, but he that holds out in this holy war, deserves the name of a saint. There is not such a thing in this sense belonging to Christianity, as an honourable retreat; not such a word of command, in all Christ's military discipline, as, Fall back, and lay down your arms; No, you must fall on, and stand to your arms, till called off by death.

First, We are under a covenant and oath to do this. Formerly soldiers used to take an oath not to flinch from their colours, but faithfully to cleave to their leaders; this they called *Sacramentum militare,* a military oath; such an oath lies upon every Christian. It is so essential to the being of a saint, that they are described

described by this, Psal. l. 5. *Gather my saints together, those that have made a covenant with me.* We are not Christians till we have subscribed this covenant, and that without any reservation. When we take upon us the profession of Christ's name, we list ourselves in his muster-roll, and by it do promise, that we will live and die with him in opposition to all his enemies. *Every nation will walk in the name of his god, and we will walk in the name of our God:* And what is it to walk in the name of our God, but to fight under the banner of his gospel, wherein his name is displayed, by giving an eternal defiance to sin and satan? If a captain had not such a tie on his soldiers, he might have them to seek when the day of battle comes: Therefore Christ tells us upon what terms he will enrol us among his disciples: *If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* He will not entertain us till we resign up ourselves freely to his disposal, that there may be no disputing with his commands afterwards, but as one under his authority, go and come at his word.

Secondly, Perseverance is necessary, because our enemy perseveres to oppose us. There is no truce in the devil's heart, no cessation of arms in our enemy's camp. If an enemy continue to assault a city, and they within cease to resist, it is easy to tell what will follow. The prophet that was sent to Bethel did his errand well, withstood Jeroboam's temptation, but in the way home was drawn aside by the old prophet, and at last slain by a lion. Thus many fly from one temptation, but not persevering are vanquished by another; those that at one time escape his sword, at another time are slain by it. Joash was hopeful when young, but it lasted not long. Yea, many precious servants of God, not making such vigorous resistance in their last days as in their first, have fallen foully, as we see in Solomon, Asa, and others. Indeed it is hard when a line is drawn to a great length, to keep it so straight that it slacken not, and to hold a thing long in our hand, and not to have a numbness grow in our fingers, so as to remit of our strength; therefore we are bid so often to hold fast the profession of our faith: but when we see an enemy gaping to catch us when we fall, methinks this should quicken us the more to it.

Thirdly, Because the promise of life and glory is settled upon the persevering soul; the crown stands at the goal, he hath it that comes to the end of the race. *To him that overcomes, will I give,* not in *prælio,* but in *bello,* not in a particular skirmish, but in the whole war. *Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the whole will of God, ye might receive the promise,* Heb. x. 36. There is a remarkable accent on that *henceforth* which Paul mentions, 2 Tim. iv. 7. 8. *I have fought a good fight,*

fight, henceforth is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.— Why, was it not laid up before? yes, but having persevered and come near the goal, being within sight of home, ready to die, he takes now surer hold of the promise. Indeed in this sense it is, that a gracious soul is nearer its salvation after every victory than it was before, because he approacheth nearer the end of his race, which is the time promised for the receiving of the promised salvation, Rom. xiii. 10. Then, and not till then the garland drops upon his head.

Use. Here we may take up a sad lamentation, in respect of the many apostate professors of our days. Never was this spiritual falling-sickness more rife: O how many are sick of it at present, and not a few fallen asleep by it! These times of war and confusion have not made so many broken merchants, as broken professors: where is the congregation that cannot shew some who have outlived their profession? Not unlike the silk-worm, which (they say) after all her spinning, works herself out of her bottom, and becomes at last a common fly. Are there not many, whose forwardness in religion we have stood gazing on with admiration, as the disciples on the temple, ready to say to one another, as they to Christ, See what manner of stones these are! what polished gifts and shining graces are here! and now not one stone left upon another. Oh did you ever think, that they who went in so goodly array towards heaven in communion with you, would after that, face about, and run over to the devil's side, turn blasphemers, wordlings, and atheists, as some have done? Oh what a sad change is here? *It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them,* 2 Pet. ii. 21. Better never to have walked a step towards heaven, than to put such a scorn and reproach upon the ways of God. Such a one who hath known what a service satan's is, and what God's is, then to revolt from God to the devil, seems to have compared one with the other, and as the result of his mature thoughts, to pronounce the devil's, which he chooseth, better than God's, which he leaveth. And how is it possible that any can sin by a higher guilt, and go to hell under greater load of wrath? These are they which God loathes. He that hates putting away, disdains much more to be himself thus put away. *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him,* Heb. x. 31. The apostate is said to tread upon the Son of God, Heb. x. 29. as if he were no better than the dirt under his feet. Well, he shall have treading for treading, God himself will set his foot upon him, Psal. cxix. 118, *Thou hast trodden down all that err from thy statutes.*— And who (think you) will be weary soonest? He that is under foot, bears the weight of the whole man upon him. To be under the

the foot of God, is to lie under the whole weight of God's wrath. Oh pity and pray for such forlorn souls: they are objects of the one, and subjects of the other; though they are fallen low, yet not into hell: now and then we see an Eutychus raised, that hath fallen from such a height. *And you that stand, take heed lest you fall.*

SECT. IV.—*Doct.* 2. Secondly, A soul void of divine armour cannot persevere. What this divine armour is, I have shewn, and the apostle here doth in the several pieces of it.—The sanctifying graces of God's spirit, are this armour: One that hath not these wrought in him, will never hold out to pass all the stages of this Christian race, to fight all the battles that are to be fought before victory is to be had. Common gifts of the spirit, such as illumination, conviction, sudden pangs and flushing heats of affection may carry out the creature for a while with a goodly appearance of zeal for God, and forwardness in profession; but the strength these affords is soon spent. John's hearers, mentioned John v. 35. got some light and heat by sitting under his burning ministry; but how long did it last? *Ye are willing to rejoice for a season.* They were very beautiful colours that were drawn on them, but not laid in oil, and therefore soon washed off again. The foolish virgins made as great a blaze with their lamps, and did expect as good a day when Christ should come, as the wise virgins; but alas! their lamps are out before he appeared, and as good never a whit as never the better. The stony ground more forward than the best soil; the seed comes up immediately, as if a crop should soon have been reaped, but a few nipping frosts turn its hue, and the day of the harvest proves a day of desperate sorrow. All these instances, and many more in scripture do evince, that nothing short of solid grace, and a principle of divine life in the soul, will persevere. How forward soever formalists and slighty professors are to promise to themselves hopes of reaching heaven, they will find it too long a step for their short-breathed souls to attain. The reasons are,

First, Such want a principle of divine life to draw strength from Christ to preserve them in their course. That by which the gracious soul itself perseveres, is the continual supply it receives from Christ; as the arm and foot is kept alive in the body by those vital spirits which they receive from the heart: *I live* (saith Paul), *yet not I, but Christ in me;* that is, I live, but at Christ's cost; he holds, as my soul, so my grace in life. Now the carnal person wanting this union, must needs waste and consume in time; he hath no root to stand on. A carcase, when once it begins to rot, never recovers, but every day grows worse till it runs all into putrefaction; no salve or plaister will do it good; but where there is a principle of life, there when a member is wounded, nature

ture sends supplies of spirits, and helps to work with the salve for a cure. There is the same difference between a gracious person and an ungracious: See them opposed in this respect, Prov. xiv. 17. *The righteous man falls seven times a day, and riseth; but the wicked falleth into mischief:* that is, in falling he falls further, and hath no power to recover himself. When Cain sinned, see how he falls further and further, like a stone down a hill, never stays till he comes to the bottom of despair; from envying his brother to malice, from malice to murder, from murder to impudent lying, and brazen-faced boldness to God himself, and from that to despair; so true is that, 2 Tim. ii. 13. *Evil men shall wax worse and worse.* But now when a saint falls, he riseth, because when he falls, he hath a principle of life to cry out to Christ, and such an interest in Christ as stirs him to help: *Lord, save me,* said Peter, (when he began to sink), and presently Christ's hand is put forth; he chides him for his unbelief, but he helps him.

Secondly, An unregenerate soul hath no assurance for the continuance of those common gifts of the spirit he hath at present; they come on the same terms that temporal enjoyments do to such a one. A carnal person, when he hath his table most sumptuously spread, cannot shew any word of promise under God's hand, that he shall be provided for the next meal. God gives these things to the wicked, as we do a crust or night's lodging to a beggar in our barn; 'tis our bounty, such a one could not sue us for denying the same: So in the common gifts of the spirit, God was not bound to give them, nor is he to continue them. Thou hast some knowledge of the things of God, thou mayest for all this die without knowledge at last: thou art a sinner in chains, restraining grace keeps thee in; this may be taken off, and thou let loose to thy lusts as ever. And how can he persevere, that in one day may from praying fall to cursing; from a whining complaining conscience, come to have a seared conscience?

Thirdly, Every unregenerate man, when most busy with profession, hath those engagements lie upon him, that will necessarily, when put to it, take him off, one time or other. One is engaged to the world; and when he can come to a good market for that, then he goes away; he cannot have both, and now he will make it appear which he loves best: *Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced this present world.* Another is a slave to his lust; and when this calls him, he must go in spite of profession, conscience, God, and all. Herod feared John, and did many things; but love is stronger than fear: his love to Herodias overcomes his fear of John, and makes him cut off at once the head of John, and the hopeful buddings which appeared in the tenderness of his conscience, and begun reformation. One root of bitterness

or

or other will spring up in such a one. If the complexion of the soul be prophane, it will at last come to it, however for a while there may be some religious colour appear in the man's face from some other external cause.

Use. This shews us what is the root of all final apostacy; and that is, the want of a thorough change of the heart. The apostate doth not lose the grace he had, but discovers he never had any; and 'tis no wonder to hear that he proves bankrupt, that was worse than nought when he first set up. Many take up their saintship upon trust, and trade in the duties of religion with the credit they have gained from others opinion of them. They believe themselves to be Christians, because others hope them to be such; and so their great business is, by a zeal in those exercises of religion that lie outmost, to keep up the credit they have abroad, but do not look to get a stock of solid grace within, which should maintain them in their profession; and this proves their undoing at last. Let it therefore make us, in the fear of God, to consider upon what score we take up our profession. Is there that within which bears proportion to our outward zeal? Have we laid a good bottom? Is not the super-structure top-heavy, jetting too far beyond the weak foundation? They say, trees shoot as much in the roots under ground as in the branches above, and so doth true grace. O remember what was the perishing of the seed in stony ground; it lacked root, and why so? but because it was stony. Be willing the plough should go deep enough to humble thee for sin, and rend thy heart from sin. The soul effectually brought out of the love of sin as sin, will never be thorough friends with it again. In a word, be serious to find out the great spring that sets all thy wheels on motion in thy religious trade. Do as men that would know how much they are worth, who set what they owe on one side, and what stock they have on the other; and then when they have laid out enough to discharge all debts and engagements, what remains to themselves they may call their own. Thus do thou consider what thou standest engaged to, thy worldly credit, profit, slavish fear of God, and selfish desire of happiness; and when thou hast allowed for all these, see then what remains of thy fear of God, love to God, &c. If nothing, thou art naught; if any, the less there be, the weaker Christian thou art; and when thou comest to be tried in God's fire, thou wilt suffer loss of all the other, which as hay and stubble will be burnt up.

SECT. V.—*Doct.* 3. Every soul clad with this armour of God, shall stand and persevere. Or this, True grace can never be vanquished. The Christian is born a conqueror, the gates of hell shall not prevail against him. *He that is born of God overcometh the world,* 1 John v. 4. Mark from whence the victory

tory is dated, even from his birth: there is victory sown in his new nature, even that seed of God, which will keep him from being swallowed up by sin or satan. As Christ rose, never to die more; so doth he raise souls from the grave of sin, never to come under the power of spiritual death more. *These holy ones of God cannot see corruption.* Hence he that believes, is said in the present tense to have eternal life. As the law that came four hundred years after could not make void the promise to Abraham; so nothing that intervenes can hinder the accomplishing of that promise of eternal life, which was given and passed to Christ in their behalf, before the foundation of the world. If a saint could any wise miscarry and fall short of this eternal life, it must be from one of these three causes. 1. Because God may forsake the Christian, and withdraw his grace and help from him; Or, 2. Because the believer may forsake God; Or, lastly, Because satan may pluck him out of the hands of God. A fourth I know not. Now none of these can be.

First, God can never forsake the Christian. Some unadvised speeches have dropt from tempted souls, discovering some fears of God's casting them off; but they have been confuted, and have eaten their words with shame, as we see in Job and David. Oh what admirable security hath the great God given his children in this particular!

1. *In promises. He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. Five negatives in that promise, as so many seals to ratify it to our faith: he assures us there never did or can so much as arise a repenting thought in his heart concerning the purposes of his love and special grace towards his children. Rom. xi. 29. *The gifts and calling of God are without repentance*, even the believers sin against him, their froward carriage stirs not up thoughts of casting off, but of reducing them: *For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him; I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart; I have seen his ways, and will heal him*, Isa. lvii. 17, 18. The water of the saint's failings, cast on the fire of God's love, cannot quench it; *Whom he loves, he loves to the end.*

2. God, to give further weight and credit to our unbelieving and misgiving hearts, seals his promise with an oath. See Isa. liv. 9, 10. *With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer; this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should not return over the earth, so have I sworn that I will not be wroth with thee.* Yea, he goes on and tells there, *The mountains shall depart* (meaning at the end of the world, when the whole frame of the heavens and earth shall be dissolved), *but his kindness shall not depart, neither shall his covenant of peace be removed.*

moved. Now, lest any should think this was some charter belonging to the Jews alone, we find it, ver. 17. settled on every servant of God as his portion: *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord.* And surely God that is so careful to make his children's inheritance sure to them, will give them little thanks, who busy their wits to invalidate and weaken his conveyances, yea, disprove his will: if they had taken a bribe, they could not plead satan's cause better.

3. In the actual fulfilling these promises, (which he hath made to believers) to Christ their attorney. As God, before the world began, gave a promise of eternal life to Christ for them, so now hath he given actual possession of that glorious place to Christ (as their advocate and attorney), where that eternal life shall be enjoyed by them; for as he came upon our errand from heaven, so thither he returned again, to take and hold possession of that inheritance, which God had of old promised, and he in one sum at his death had paid for. And now what ground of fear can there be in the believer's heart concerning God's love standing firm to him, when he sees the whole covenant performed already to Christ for him, whom God hath not only called to, sanctified for, and upheld in the great work he was to finish for us, but also justified in his resurrection and goal-delivery, and received him into heaven, there to sit on the right hand of the Majesty on high, by which he hath not only possession for us, but full power to give unto all believers?

Secondly, A second occasion of fear to the believer that he shall not persevere, may be taken from himself. He has many sad fears and tremblings of heart, that he shall at last forsake God: The journey is long to heaven, and his grace weak: Oh, saith he, is it not possible that this little grace should fail, and I fall short at last of glory? Now here there is such provision made in the covenant, as scatters this cloud also.

1. The spirit of God is given on purpose to prevent this.—Christ left his mother with John, but with his saints his spirit, to tutor and keep them, that they should not lose themselves in their journey to heaven. Oh how sweet is that place, Ezek. xxxvi. 27. *I will put my spirit in you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.* He doth not say, they shall have his spirit, if they will walk in his statutes; no, his spirit shall cause them to do it. But may be thou art afraid thou mayest grieve him, and so he in anger leave thee, and thou perish for want of his help and counsel. *Ans.* The spirit of God is indeed sensible of unkindness, and, upon a saint's sin, may withdraw in regard of present assistance, but never in regard of his care; as a mother may let her froward child go alone,

alone, till it get a knock that may make it cry to be taken up again into her arms, but still her eyes are on it that it shall not fall into mischief. The spirit withdrew from Sampson, and he fell into the Philistines' hands; and this makes him cry to God, and the spirit puts forth his strength to him again. Thus here indeed the office of the spirit is to abide for ever with the saints, John xiv. 16. *He shall send you another comforter, that he may abide for ever with you.*

2. It is one main business of Christ's intercession, to obtain of God perseverance for our weak graces. *I have prayed* (saith Christ to Peter) *that thy faith fail not.* But was not that a particular privilege granted to him, which may be denied to another? Oh, sirs, do we think that Christ's love looks asquint? doth he pray for one child more than another? Such fears and jealousies foolish children are ready to take up; and therefore Christ prevents them, by bidding Peter in the very next words, *When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,* Luke xxi. 31. that is, when thou feelest the efficacy and force of my prayer for thy faith, carry this good news to them, that their hearts may be strengthened also: And what strengthening had it been to them, if Christ prayed not for them as well as for Peter? Does Christ pray for us? yea, doth he not live to pray for us? Oh how can children of so many prayers, of such prayers, perish? The saints prayers have a mighty power. Jacob wrestled and had power with God; this was his sword and bow (to allude to what he said of the parcel of ground he took from the Amorite), by which he got the victory, and had power with God. This was the key with which Elijah opened and shut heaven. And if the weak prayers of saints (coming in his name) have such credit in heaven, that with them they can go to God's treasure, and carry away as much as their arm of faith can hold; O then, what prevalency has Christ's intercession, who is a Son, an obedient Son, that is come from finishing his great work on earth, and now prays his Father for nothing but what he hath bid him ask, yea, for nothing but what he is before-hand with him for, and all this to a Father that loves those he prays for as well as himself? Bid satan avaunt. Say not thy weak faith shall perish, till thou hearest that Christ hath left praying, or meets with a repulse.

3. Let us see whether satan be able to pluck the Christian away, and step betwixt him and home. I have had occasion to speak of this subject in another place, the less here shall serve.—Abundant provision is made against his assaults. The saint is wrapt up in the everlasting arms of Almighty power; and what can a cursed devil do against God, which laid those chains on him which he cannot shake off? When he is able to pluck that dart of divine fury out of his own conscience which God hath

fastened there, then let him think of such an enterprize as this How can he overcome thee, that cannot tempt thee but in God's appointed time? And if God set satan his time to assault the Christian whom he loves so dearly, surely it shall be when he shall be repulsed with greatest shame.

Use 1. Away, then, with that doctrine which saith, One may be a saint to-day, and none to-morrow; now a Peter, anon a Judas: O how unsavoury stuff is this! a principle it is that at once crosseth the main design of God in the gospel-covenant, reflects sadly on the honour of Christ, and wounds the saint's comfort to the heart.

First, It is derogatory to God's design in the gospel-covenant, which we find to be this, That his children might be put into a state sure and safe from miscarrying at last, which by the first covenant man was not. See Rom. vi. 16. *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed.* God on purpose, because of the weakness of the first covenant, through the mutable nature of man, makes a new covenant of a far different constitution and frame, not of works, as that was, but of faith; and why? The apostle tells us, that it might be sure to *all the seed*, that not one soul, who by faith should be adopted into Abraham's family, and so become a child of the promise, should fail of inheriting the blessing of the promise, which is eternal life; called so, Tit. i. 2.; and all this because the promise is founded upon grace, that is, God's immutable good pleasure in Christ, and not upon the variable and inconstant obedience of man, as the first covenant was. But if a saint may finally fall, then is the promise no more sure in this covenant than it was in that, and so God should not have his end he propounds.

Secondly, It reflects sadly on Christ's honour, both as he is intrusted with the saints salvation, and also as he is interested in it. *First*, as he is intrusted with the saints salvation. He tells us they are given him of his Father for this very end, that he should give them eternal life; yea, that power which he hath over all flesh was given him, to render him every way able to effect this one business, John xvii. 2. He accepts the charge, owns them as his sheep, knows them every one, and promiseth, *He will give them eternal life; they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of his hand*, John x. 27, 28. Now how well do they consult with Christ's honour, that say his sheep may die in a ditch of final apostacy, notwithstanding all this? *Secondly*, As he is interested in the salvation of every saint, the life of his own glory is bound up in the eternal life of his saints. It's true, when Adam fell, God did save his stake; but how can Christ, who is so nearly united to every believing soul? There was a league of friendship

friendship betwixt God and Adam; but no such union as here, where Christ and his saints make but one Christ, for which his church is called *Christ*, 1 Cor. xii. 12. *As the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body, so is Christ.* Christ and his members make one Christ: Now is it possible a piece of Christ can be found at last burning in hell? Can Christ be a cripple Christ? Can this member drop off and that? 'Tis as possible that all, as any should; and how can Christ part with his mystical members, and not with his glory? Doth not every member add an ornament to the body, yea, an honour? The church is called *the fulness of him*, Eph. i. 23. O how dishonourable is it to Christ, that we should think he should want any of his fulness? And how can the man be full and complete that wants a member?

Thirdly, It wounds the saints comfort to the heart, and lays their joy a bleeding. Paul saith, he did not dash the generous wine of God's word with the water of man's conceits, 2 Cor. ii. 17.; no, he gave them pure gospel. Truly this principle of saints falling from grace gives a sad dash to the sweet wine of the promises; the soul-reviving comfort that sparkles in them ariseth from the sure conveyance with which they are in Christ made over to the believers to have and to hold for ever. Hence called *the sure mercies of David*, Acts xiii. 34. mercies that shall never fail. This, this indeed, is wine that makes glad the heart of a saint; though he may be whipt in the house when he sins, yet he shall not be turned out of doors. As God promised in the type to David's seed, Psal. lxxxix. 33. *Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail*, and, ver. 36. *His seed shall endure for ever.* Could any thing separate the believer from the love of God in Christ, this would be as a hole at the bottom of his cup to leak out all his joy; he might then fear every temptation or affliction he meets would slay him, and so the wicked's curse would be the saint's portion. His life would ever hang in doubt before him, and the fearful expectation of his final miscarriage, which he sees may befal him, would eat up the joy of his present hope. Now how contrary such a frame of heart is to the spirit of adoption, and full assurance of hope, which the grace of the new covenant gives, he that runs may read in the word.

Use 2. This truth prepares a sovereign cordial to restore the fainting spirits of weak believers, who are surprised with many fears concerning their persevering, and holding out to the end of their warfare. Be of good cheer, poor soul, God hath given Christ the life of every soul within the ark of his covenant.—Your eternal safety is provided for; *Whom he loves, he loves to the end*, John xiii. 1. Hath he made thee willing in the day of

his power to march under his banner, and espouse his quarrel against sin and hell? the same power that overcame thy rebellious heart to himself, will overcome all thy enemies within and without for thee: Say not, Thou art a bruised reed; with this he will break satan's head, and not cease till he hath brought forth judgment unto complete victory in thy soul. He that can make a few wounded men rise up and take a strong city, can make a wounded spirit triumph over sin and devils, Jer. xxxvii. 10. The ark stood in the midst of Jordan till the whole camp of Israel was safely got over into Canaan, Josh. iii. And so doth the covenant (which the ark did but typify), yea, Christ, covenant, and all, stand to secure the saints a free passage to heaven. If but one believer drown, the covenant must drown with him. Christ and the saints are put together as co-heirs of the same inheritance, Rom. viii. 17. *If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* We cannot dispute against one, but we question the firmness of the other's title. When you hear Christ is turned out of heaven, or himself to be willing to sell his inheritance there, then, poor Christian, fear thy coming thither, and not till then. Co-heirs cannot sell the inheritance, except both give up their right, which Christ will never do, nor suffer thee.

Use 3. Thirdly, This truth calls for a word or two of caution. Though there is no fear of a saint's falling from grace, yet there is great danger of others falling from the top of this comfortable doctrine, into a careless security, and presumptuous boldness; and therefore a battlement is very necessary, that from it we may with safety to our souls stand and view the pleasant prospect this truth presents to our eye. That flower from which the bee sucks honey, the spider draws poison. That which is a restorative to the saint's grace, proves an incentive to the lust of a wicked man. What Paul said of the law, we may truly of the gospel: Sin taking occasion from the grace of the gospel, and the sweet promises thereof, deceives the carnal heart, and works in him all manner of wickedness. Indeed sin seldom grows so rank any where, as in those who water its roots with the grace of the gospel. Two ways this doctrine may be abused.

First, Into a neglect of duty.

Secondly, Into a liberty to sin: Take heed of both.

First, Beware of falling into a neglect of duty upon this score: If a Christian, thou canst not fall away from grace. Take for an antidote against this, three particulars.

1. There are other arguments to invite, yea, that will constrain thee to a constant vigorous performing of duty, though the fear of falling away should not come in, or else thou art not a Christian; what! nothing make the child diligent about his father's business,

business, but fear of being disinherited and turned out of doors? There is sure some better motive to duty in a saint's heart, or else religion is a melancholy work. Speak for yourselves, O ye saints, is self-preservation all you pray for, and hear for? should a messenger come from heaven, and tell you heaven were yours, would this make you give over your spiritual trade, and not care whether you had any more acquaintance with God till you came thither? O how harsh doth this sound in your ears! There are such principles engraven in the Christian's bosom, that will not suffer a strangeness long to grow betwixt God and him. He is under the law of a new life, which carries him naturally to desire communion with God, as the child doth to see the face of his dear father; and every duty is a mount wherein God presents himself to be seen and enjoyed by every Christian.

2. To neglect duty upon such persuasion, is contrary to Christ's practice and counsel. First, His practice. Though Christ never doubted of his Father's love, nor questioned the happy issue of all his temptations, agonies, and sufferings; yet he prays, and prays again more earnestly, Luke xxii. 44. Secondly, His counsel and command. He told Peter, that satan had begged leave to have him to sift him. But withal he comforts him (who was to be hardest put to it) with this, *But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* Sure our Saviour by this provision made for him and the rest, means to save them a labour that they need not watch or pray. No such matter, after this, as you may see ver. 40. He calls them up to duty. *Pray, that ye enter not into temptation.* Christ's praying for them was to strengthen their faith, when they should themselves pray for the same mercy; not to nourish their sloth, that they needed not to pray. Christ's prayers in heaven for his saints are all heard already, but the return of them is reserved to be inclosed in the answer God sends to their own prayers: The Christian cannot in faith expect to receive the mercies Christ prays for in heaven, so long as he lives in the neglect of his duty on earth. They stand ready against he call for them by the prayer of faith, and if they be not worth sending this messenger to heaven, truly they are worth little.

3. Consider, that although the Christian be secured from a total and final apostacy, yet he may fall sadly, to the bruising of his conscience, enfeebling his grace, and reproach of the gospel, which sure are enough to keep the Christian upon his watch, and the more, because ordinarily the saints backslidings begin in their duties. As it is with tradesmen in the world, they first grow careless of their business, often out of their shops, and then they go behind hand in their estates: so here, first remiss in a duty, and then fall into a decay of their graces and comforts, yea, sometimes into those ways that are scandalous. A stuff loseth its gloss

before it wears: the Christian, the lustre of his grace in the lively exercise of duty, and then the strength of it.

Secondly, Take heed of abusing this doctrine into a liberty to sin; shall we sin because grace abounds? grow loose because we have God fast bound in his promise? God forbid, none but a devil would teach us this logic. It was a great height of sin those wretched Jews came to, who could quaff and carouse it, while death looked in upon them at the windows. *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.* They discovered their atheism therein. But what a prodigious stature in sin must that man be grown to, that can sin under the protection of the promise, and draw his encouragement to sin, from the everlasting love of God? Let us eat and drink, for we are sure to be saved. Grace cannot dwell in that heart which draws such a cursed conclusion from the promises of God's grace; the saints have not so learned Christ. The inference the apostle makes from the sweet privileges we enjoy in the covenant of grace, is, not to wallow in sin: but having these promises, to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1. 'Tis the nature of faith (the grace that trades with promises), to purify the heart. Now the more certain report faith brings of God's love from the promise of the soul, the more it purifies the heart, because love, by which faith works, is thereby more enflamed to God; and if once this affection takes fire, the room becomes too hot for sin to stay there.

SECT. II.—The fourth last and note is, That it will abundantly recompense all the hardship and trouble the Christian endures in this war against sin and satan, that he will be able when the war is ended to stand. In man's wars all do not get by them that fight in them; the gains of these is commonly put into a few pockets. The common soldiers endure most of the hardship, but go away with little of the profit; they fight to make a few that are great, yet greater, and many times themselves turned off at last, with what will hardly pay for the cure of their wounds, or keep them from starving in a poor hospital. But in this war there is none loseth, but he that runs away. A glorious reward there is for every faithful soldier in Christ's camp, and that is wrapt up in this phrase, *Having done all, to stand.* Now this place, *to stand*, imports three things, which, laid together, will clear the point.

First, *To stand*, in this place, is to stand conquerors. An army, when conquered, is said to fall before their enemy, and the conqueror, to stand. Lev. xxvi. Dan. xi. 25. Every Christian shall at the end of the war stand a conqueror over his vanquished lusts, and satan that headed them. Many a sweet victory the Christian hath here over satan: But (alas!) the joy of these conquests

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is again interrupted with fresh alarms from his rallied enemy.—One day he hath the better, and may be the next he puts us to the hazard of another battle, much ado he hath to keep what he hath got: yea, his victories are such as send him bleeding out of the field: Though he repulses the temptation at last, yet the wounds his conscience gets in the fight, do overcast the glory of the victory. 'Tis seldom the Christian comes off without some sad complaint of the treachery of his own heart, which had like to have lost the day, and betrayed him into his enemies hand.—But for thy eternal comfort, know, (poor Christian) there is a blessed day coming, which shall make a full and final decision of the quarrel betwixt thee and satan; thou shalt see this enemy's camp quite broke up; not a weapon left in his hand to lift up against thee. Thou shalt tread upon his high places, from which he hath made so many shots at thee. Thou shalt see them all dismantled and demolished, till there be not left standing any one corruption in thy bosom, for a devil to hide and harbour himself in. Satan, at whose approach thou hast so trembled, shall then be subdued under thy feet: He that hath so oft bid thee bow down, that he might go over thy soul, and trample upon all thy glory, shall now have his neck laid to be trodden on by thee. Were there nothing else to be expected as the fruits of our watching and praying, weeping and mourning, severe duties of mortification and self-denial, with whatever else our Christian warfare puts us upon, but this, our labour sure would not be in vain in the Lord. Yea, blessed watching and praying, happy tears and wounds we meet with in this war; may they but at last end in a full and eternal victory over sin and satan. Bondage is one of the worst of evils. The baser an enemy is, the more abhorred by noble spirits. Saul feared to fall into the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines, and to be abused by their scorns and reproaches more than a bloody death: Who baser than satan? What viler tyrant than sin? Glorious then will the day be, wherein we shall praise God for delivering us out of the hands of all our sins, and from the hand of satan. But dismal to you (sinners) who at the same time, wherein you shall see the saints stand with crowns of victory on their heads, must, like fettered captives, be dragged to hell's dungeon, there to have your ear bored unto an eternal bondage under your lusts. And what more miserable sentence can God himself pass upon you? Here sin is pleasure, there it will be your torment. Here a sweet bit, and goes down glib, but there it will stick in your throats. Here you have suitable provision to entertain yonr lusts withal; palaces for pride to dwell and strut herself in; delicious fare for your wanton palates; houses and lands, with coffers of silver and gold for your covetous hearts, by their self-pleasing thoughts to sit brooding upon: But you will

find none of these there; hell is a barren place, nothing grows in that land of darkness to solace and recreate the sinners minds.—You shall have your lusts, but want the food you long for. O what a torment must that needs be, to have a soul sharp set, even to a ravenous hunger after sin, but chained up where it can come at nothing it would have to satisfy its lusts: For a proud wretch, that could wish he might domineer over all the world, yea, over God himself if he would let him, to be kept down in such a dungeon as hell is, O how it will cut! for the malicious sinner, whose heart swells with rancour against God and his saints, that he could pluck them out of God's bosom, yea, God out of his throne, if he had power, to find his hands so manacled, that he can do nothing against them he so hates: O how this will torment! Speak, O you saints, whose partial victory over sin at present is so sweet to you, that you would choose a thousand deaths, sooner than return to your old bondage under your lusts: How glorious then is that day in your eye, when this shall be compleated in a full and eternal conquest, never to have any thing to do more with sin or satan!

Secondly, *To stand*, is here to stand justified and acquitted at the great day of judgment. The phrase is frequent in scripture, which sets out the solemn discharge they shall have then by standing in judgment, Psal. i. 5. *The wicked shall not stand in judgment;* that is, they shall not be justified. Psal. cxxx. 3. *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, O Lord, who shall stand?* That is, who shall be acquitted? The great God, upon whose errand we come into the world, hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ! a solemn day it will be, when all that ever lived on earth, high and low, good and bad, shall meet in one assembly to make their personal appearance before Christ, and from his mouth to receive their eternal doom, who shall in his majestic robes of glory ascend the awful seat of judicature, attended with his illustrious train and guard of angels about him, and so many officers ready to execute and perform his pleasure, according to the definitive sentence that he shall pronounce, either to conduct those blessed ones whom he shall justify into his glorious kingdom, or bind them hand and foot to be cast into hell's unquenchable flames whom he shall condemn. I do not wonder that Paul's sermon on this subject did make an earthquake in Felix his conscience: But rather that any should be so far gone in a lethargy and dedolent numbness of conscience, as the thought of this day cannot recover them to their sense and feeling. O sirs, do you not vote them happy men and women that shall speed well on this day? Are not your thoughts enquiring who those blessed souls are, which shall be acquitted by the lively voice of Christ the judge? You need not ascend to search the rolls of election

tion in heaven; here you may know they are such as fight the Lord's battles on earth against satan, in the Lord's armour, and that to the end of their lives. These having done all, shall stand in judgment. And were it but at a man's bar, some court-martial, where a soldier stood upon trial for his life, either to be condemned as a traitor to his prince, or cleared as faithful in his trust, O how such a one would listen to hear how it would go with him, and be overjoyed when the judge pronounces him innocent? well may such be bid to fall down on their knees, thank God and the judge that have saved their lives! How much more ravishing will the sweet voice of Christ be in the saints ears, when he shall in the face of men and angels make public declaration of their righteousness! O how confounded will satan then be, who was their accuser to God and their consciences also, ever threatening them with the terror of that day! how blank will the wicked world be, to see the dirt that they had thrown by their calumnies and lying reports on the saints faces, wiped off with Christ's own hand; they from Christ's mouth to be justified as sincere, whom they had called hypocrites! Will not this, O ye saints, be enough for all the scorn you were laden with from the world, and conflict you endured with the prince of the world? But this is not all.—Therefore,

Thirdly, *To stand* doth here also (as the complement of their reward) denote the saints standing in heaven's glory. Princes, when they would reward any of their subjects, that in their wars have done eminent service to the crown (as the utmost they can do for them), do prefer them to court, their to enjoy their princely favour, and stand in some place of honourable service before them continually. Solomon sets it out as the greatest reward of subjects, *to stand before kings*. Heaven is the royal city, where the great God keeps his court. The happiness of glorious angels is to stand there before God. *I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God*, Luke i. 9. that is, I am one of those heavenly spirits, who wait on the great God, and stand before his face, as courtiers do about their prince. Now such honour shall every faithful soul have. *Thus saith the Lord of hosts, If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by*, Zech. iii. 7. He alludes to the temple, which had rooms joining to it, for the priests that waited on the Lord in his holy service there: Or to courtiers, that have stately galleries and lodgings becoming their place at court, allowed them in the King's palace they wait upon. Thus all the saints (whose representative Joshua was) shall, after they have kept the Lord's charge in a short life's service on earth, be called up to stand before God in heaven, where with angels they shall have their galleries and mansions of glory also. O,

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happy they, who shall stand before their Lord in glory! The greatest peers of a realm, such as earls, marquisses and dukes, count it greater honour to stand before their king, though bare-headed, and oft upon the knee, than to live in the country, where all bow and stand bare to them; yea, let but their prince forbid them coming to court, and 'tis not their great estates, or respect they have where they live, will content them. 'Tis better to wait on heaven, than to reign on earth. 'Tis sweet standing before the Lord here in an ordinance; one day in the worship of God is better than many elsewhere; O, what then is it to stand before God in glory! if the saint's spikenard sendeth forth so sweet a smell, while the king sits at his table here in a sermon or sacrament, Cant. i. 12. O then, what joy must needs flow from their near attendance on him, as he sits at his table in heaven, which when God first made, it was intended by him to be that chamber of presence, in which he would present himself to be seen of, and enjoyed by his saints in all his glory! I know nothing would have a more powerful, yea, universal operation upon a saint's spirit, that the frequent and spiritual consideration of that blissful state in heaven, which at last will crown all their sad conflicts here on earth. None like this sword to cut the very sinews of temptation, and behead those lusts, which defy and out-brave whole troops of other arguments. It is almost impossible to sin with lively thoughts and hopes of that glory. 'Tis when the thoughts of heaven are long out of the Christian's sight, and he knows not what is become of his hopes of that glorious place, that he begins to set up some idol (as Israel the calf in Moses's absence) which he may dance before. But let heaven come in sight, and the Christian's heart will be warmed with the thoughts of it, and you may as soon persuade a king to throw his royal diadem into a sink, and wallow with his robes in a kennel, as a saint to sin with expectation of heaven's glory. Sin is a devil's work, not a saint's, who is a peer in heaven, and waits every hour for the writ that shall call him to stand with angels and glorified saints before the throne of God. This would cheer the Christian's heart, and confirm him when the fight is hottest, and the bullets fly thickest from men and devils, to think, 'tis heaven all this is for, where it's worth having a place, though we go through fire and water to it. *'Tis before the Lord* (saith David to scoffing Michal) *that chose me before thy father and all his house; therefore I will play before the Lord, and I will yet be more vile than thus*, 2 Sam. vi. 21. Thus, Christian, wouldst thou throw off the vipers of reproaches, which from the fire of the wicked's malice fly upon thee? 'Tis for God that I pray, hear, mortify my lusts, deny myself of my carnal sports, profits, and pleasures; that God who hath passed by kings and princes, to choose me, a poor wretch, to stand before him

him in glory: therefore I will be yet more vile than thus. O sirs, were there not another world to enjoy God in, yet should we not, while we have our being, serve our Maker? The heavens and the earth obey his law, they are capable of no reward for doing his will. *Quench hell, burn heaven,* (said a holy man), *yet I will love and fear my God.* How much more, when the everlasting arms of mercy stand ready stretched to carry you, as soon as the fight is over, into the blissful presence of God! You have servants of your own so ingenuous and observant, that can follow your work hard, abroad in all weathers; and may they but, when they come home weary and hungry at night, obtain a kind look from you, and some tender care over them, they are very thankful. *Yea,* (saith one, to shame the sluggish Christian), *how many hundred miles will the poor spaniel run after his master in a journey, who gets nothing but a few crumbs, or a bone from his master's trencher?* In a word, which is more, the devil's slaves, what will they not do and venture at his command, who hath not so much to give them as you to your dog, not a crust, not a drop of water to cool their tongue? And shall not the joy of heaven, which is set before the Christian, into which he shall assuredly enter, make him run his race, and endure a short scuffle of temptation and affliction? Yea sure, and make him reckon also, that *these are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in him.*

EPHESIANS VI. 14.

[*Stand therefore, &c.*]

THE apostle hath laid down in general, ver. 13. what armour the Christian soldier must use: *armour of God.* Now lest any should stamp divinity upon what is human, and make bold to set God's name on their counterfeit ware, calling that armour of God which comes out of their private forge (as papists, and many carnal protestants also do, who invent weapons to fight the devil with, that never came into God's heart to appoint). He therefore comes more particularly to shew what this whole armour of God is, describing it piece by piece, which together make up the complete suit, and every way furnish the Christian to take the field against this his enemy. We shall handle them in that order we find them here laid by the apostle. Only something would briefly be first said to the posture given us in charge, as that which we are to observe in the use of every piece, and therefore prefixed to all, because it hath influence upon all. The posture lies in these words, *stand therefore, steate, stand.* This word is the same with the last in the precedent verse; but neither in the same mood, nor tense: There put for victory and triumph when the war

war is done, here for the Christian's posture in the fight, and in order to it. It is a military expression, a word of command that captains use upon different occasions to their soldiers, and so imports several duties that are required at the Christian's hands.

CHAP. I.

Wherein is briefly shewn the Necessity of resisting Satan's Temptations, with the Danger of yielding to them.

FIRST, *To stand,* is opposed to a cowardly flight from, or treacherous yielding to the enemy. When a captain sees his men begin to shrink, and perceives some disposition in them to flee or yield, then he bids *stand,* that is, stand manfully to it, and make good your ground against the enemy, by a valiant receiving his charge, and repelling his force. The word taken thus, points at a suitable duty incumbent on the Christian, which take in this note.

Note. Satan in his temptations is stoutly to be resisted, not in any wise yielded unto.

Reas. 1. The command is express for it, 1 Pet. v. 9. *Whom resist stedfast in the faith.* Set yourselves in battle against him, as the word imports, fight him whenever he comes. Soldiers must keep close to their commission, whatever comes on it.—When Joab sent Uriah to stand in the fore-front of the battle, in the face of death itself, he could not but see his danger, yet he disputes not the matter with his general: obey he must, though he loses his life upon the place. Cowardice and disobedience to the leader's command are counted, among the Turks, the most damning sins; and shall they be thought peccadilloes, little ones, by us that have Christ for our captain to serve, and sin and the devil for enemies to fight? To resist some temptations may cost us dear. *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood* (saith the apostle) *striving against sin,* Heb. xii. 4. implying it may come to that, and if it should, it alters not the case, nor gives a dispensation to shift for ourselves, by choosing to sin, rather than to suffer. The Roman captain said it was necessary to fall, not to live; and shall a Christian be afraid of his duty, when it is attended with any hazard? The soldier carries his prince's honour into the field with him, and so doth the Christian his God's, whenever he is called to contest with any temptation: Now it will be seen at what rate he values his honour. David's subjects valued him worth ten thousand of their lives, and therefore would die every man of them, rather than hazard him. Oh how unworthy, then,

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is it to expose the name of God to reproach, rather than ourselves to a little scorn, temporal loss, or trouble? It was Pompey's boast, that at a word or nod of his, he could make his soldiers creep up the steepest rock on their hands and knees, though they were knocked down as fast as they went up. Truly, God is not prodigal of the blood of his servants, yet sometimes he tries their loyalty in hard services, and sharp temptations, that he may from their faithfulness to him, and holy stoutness in their sufferings for him, triumph over satan, who was so impudent as to tell God, that one of his choicest servants did but serve himself in serving of him, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* As if when any sharp encounter came, he would turn head, and rather curse God, than submit to him; and therefore we find the Lord glorying over satan, Job ii. 3. *Still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him;* as if the Lord had said, what dost thou think now, satan? Hath not Job proved thee a loud liar? I have some servants, thou seest, that will serve me without a bribe, that will hold fast their integrity, when they can hold fast nothing else. Thou hast got away his estate, servants, and children, and yet he stands his ground, and thou hast not got thy will of him, nor his integrity from him.

2. God furnisheth us with armour for this end, that we should stand it out valiantly, and not yield to satan tempting. To deliver up a castle into an enemy's hand, when 'tis well provided with ammunition to defend it, is shameful and unworthy of such a trust. This makes the Christian's sin more dishonourable than another's, because he is better appointed to make resistance.—Take a graceless soul, when solicited (suppose) to a sin that promiseth carnal pleasure or profit, 'tis no great wonder that he yields at first summons, and delivers up himself prisoner to satan: The poor wretch, alas! hath no armour on to repel the motion. He tastes no sweetness in Christ: what marvel is it, if his hungry soul, for want of better food, falls on board upon the devil's cheer? That he, who hath no hope of another world, be made to shark and prowl to get some of this? The goat (we say) must browze where she is tied, and the sinner feed on earth and earthly things, to which he is staked down by his carnal heart. But the Christian hath a hope in his bosom of possessing greater glory than this peddling world can pretend to; yea, a faith that is able to entertain him at present with some of heaven's joys, it being the nature of that grace to give existence to the good things of the promise; this helmet on, and shield lift up, would keep off a whole shower of such arrows from hurting a Christian. God hath reason to take it the worse at his hands to yield that might have stood, would he but have made use of those graces which God had given him for his defence, or called in help from heaven

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to his succour. *Hast thou eaten* (saith God to Adam) *of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?* Gen. iii. 11. The accent lies in *thou*. It was not sure for hunger, thou hadst a whole paradise before thee; hast thou eaten, that wert provided so well to have withstood him? Hast thou (may God say to the Christian) eaten of the devil's dainties, who hast a key to go to my cupboard? Does thy heavenly Father keep so starved a house, that the devil's scraps will go down with thee?

Thirdly, The Christian's safety lies in resisting. All the armour here provided is to defend the Christian fighting, none to secure him flying: stand, and the day is ours; fly or yield, and all is lost. Great captains, to make their soldiers more resolute, do sometimes cut off all hope of a safe retreat to them, then run away: Thus the Norman conqueror, as soon as his men were set on English shore, sent away his ships in their sight, that they might resolve to fight or die. God takes away all thought of safety to the coward. Not a piece to be found for the back in all God's armoury. Stand, and bullets light all on your armour; fly, and they enter into your hearts. It is a terrible place, Heb. x. 38. *The just shall live by faith; but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.* He that stands to it believingly, comes off with his life; but he that recoils, and runs from his colours, as the word *upostelletai* imports, God will have no pleasure in him, except it be in the just execution of his wrath on him. And doth he not make a sad change, that, from fighting against satan, engageth God as an enemy against him? There is comfort in striving against sin and satan, though to blood; but none to lie sweating under the fiery indignation of a revenging God. What satan lays on, God can take off; but who can ease, if God lays on? What man would not rather die in the field, fighting for his prince, than on a scaffold by the axe, for cowardice or treachery?

Fourthly, The enemy we have to do withal is such as is only to be dealt with by resisting. God is an enemy that is overcome by yielding, the devil only by force of arms.

1. He is a cowardly enemy; though he sets a bold face on it in tempting, he carries a fearful heart in his breast. The work is naught he goes about; and, as a thief, is afraid of every light he sees, or noise he hears in the house he would rob, so satan is discouraged where he finds the soul waking, and in a posture to oppose him. He fears thee (Christian) more than thou needest do him. *Jesus I know, and Paul I know* (saith the devil), Acts xix. 15. That is, I know them to my shame; they have both put me to flight; and if ye were such as they, I should fear you also. Believe it, soul, he trembles at thy faith; put it forth in prayer to call for help to heaven against him, and exert it vigorously

gorously by rejecting the motions he makes, and thou shalt see him run. Did soldiers in a castle know that their enemies besieging them were in a distracted condition, and would certainly, upon their sallying out, break up and fly away, what metal and courage would this fill them withal? The spirit of God (who knows well enough how squares go in the devil's camp) sends this intelligence unto every soul that is besieged by his temptations, Jam. iv. 8. *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* He cannot hurt us without our leave. The devil is not so good a drawer, but when he finds it comes not, the soul yields not, his heart then fails him, at least for the present, as in Christ's combat, 'tis said, *he departed from him for a season.* When the devil continues long the same suit, 'tis to be feared that person, though he hath not fully promised him, yet he hath not given him a peremptory denial. He is a suitor that listens for something to drop from the creature that may encourage him to prosecute his motion; no way to be rid of him, but to shut the door upon him, and deny all discourse with him; which prompts to the second character.

2. He is an incroaching enemy, and therefore to be resisted. *Let not the sun go down upon your wrath* (saith the apostle), *neither give place to the devil*, Eph. iv. 26.; as soldiers, by cowardly leaving some out-work they are set to defend, give place to their enemy who enters the same, and from thence doth more easily shoot into the city than he could before. Thus yielding in one temptation, we let the devil into our trench, and give him a fair advantage to do us the more mischief. The angry man, while he is raging and raving, thinks, may be, no more but to ease his passion by disgorging it in some bitter keen words; but, alas, while his fury and wrath is sallying out at the portal of his lips, the devil, finding the door open, enters and hurries him further than he dreamed of. We have not to do with an Hannibal (who, though a great swordsman, yet wanted the art of following and improving the advantages his victories gave him), but with a cunning devil, that will easily lose no ground he gets; our best way therefore is to give him no hand-hold, not so much as to come near the door where sin dwells, lest we be hooked in; if we mean not to be burnt, let us not walk upon the coals of temptation; if not to be tanned, let us not stand where the sun shines. They sure forget what an insinuating wriggling nature this serpent hath, that dare yield to him in something, and make us believe they will not in another; who will, in the company of drunkards, frequent the places where the sin is committed, and yet pretend they mean not to be such? That will prostitute their eyes to unchaste objects, and yet be chaste? That will lend their ears to any corrupt doctrine of the times, and yet be found in the faith?

faith? This is a strong delusion that such were under. If a man hath not power enough to resist satan in the less, what reason hath he to think he shall in the greater? Thou hast not grace (it seems) to keep thee from throwing thyself into the whirl of temptation; and dost thou think, when in it, thou shalt bear up against the stream of it? One would think it is easier, when in the ship, to keep from falling overboard, than when in the sea, to get safely into the ship again.

3. He is an accusing enemy; and truly folly is in that man's name, who knows what a tell-tale the devil is, and yet will, by yielding to his temptation, put an errand into his mouth, with which he may accuse him to God. Some foolishly report, that witches cannot hurt, till they receive an alms: but I am sure, so long as thou shewest no kindness to the devil, he cannot hurt thee, because he cannot accuse thee; take up therefore holy Job's resolution, Job xxvii. *My righteousness I will hold fast, my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.* It is never sad indeed with the soul, till the barking is within doors; conscience (not the devil) is the blood-hound that pulls down the creature. Oh let not that reproach thee, and thou art well enough.

CHAP. II.

Wherein is shewed, What it is for a Christian to Stand in Order, together with his Duty in this Particular, and the Danger of Stragglers from their own Place.

SECONDLY, *To stand*, amounts to as much as to stand every one in his rank and proper station, and is here opposed to all disorder or straggling from our place. When a captain sees his soldiers march or fight out of their rank and order, then he bids *stand*. Military discipline is so strict in this case, that it allows none to stir from their place, without special warrant. It hath cost some their lives for fighting out of their place, though with great success. Manlius killed his own son for no other fault. From hence the note is,

Note. That it should be the care of every Christian to stand orderly in the particular place wherein God hath set him. The devil's method is first to rout, and then to ruin. Order supposeth company, one that walks alone cannot go out of his rank. This place, therefore, and rank wherein the Christian is to stand, relates to some society or company in which he walks. The Christian may be considered in relation to a three-fold society, church, commonwealth, and family. In all there are several ranks and places.

places. In the church, officers and private members. In the commonwealth, magistrates and people. In the family, masters and servants; parents and children; husband and wife. The welfare of these societies consisteth in the order that is kept, when every wheel moves in its place without clashing, when every one contributes by performing the duty of his place to the benefit of the whole society; but more distinctly, then a person stands orderly in his place, when he hath these three things.

1. When he understands the peculiar duty of his place and relation. *The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way*, Prov. xiv. 8. His way, that is the way which he in particular is to walk. It will not profit a man to know the way to York, if going to London; yet how prone are we to study another's way and work than our own? The servant what his master's duty is, nor what his is to his master. The people what the minister in his place should do, rather than what is incumbent on themselves to such as are over them in the Lord. It is not knowing another's duty, no, nor censuring the negligence of another, but doing our own, will bring us safely and comfortably to our journey's end; and how can we do it, except we know it? Solomon in no one thing gave a greater proof of his wisdom, than in asking of God wisdom to enable him for the duty of his place.

Secondly, When knowing the duty of our place, we conscientiously attend to it, and lay out ourselves for God therein. What Paul charged Timothy in his place, that every Christian must do in his; he must meditate on these things, and give himself wholly to the discharge of his duty: as a Christian in such a place and calling, *en toutois isthi*, 1 Tim. iv. 15. *be in them*, let thy heart be on thy work, and thou wholly taken up about it. The very power of godliness lies in this. Religion, if not made practicable in our several places and callings, becomes ridiculous, and vanisheth into an empty notion that is next to nothing. Yet many there are that have nothing to prove themselves Christians, but a naked profession, of whom we may say as they do of the cinnamon tree, that the bark is more worth than all they have besides. Such the apostle speaks of, Tit. i. 16. *They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.* What good works the apostle means, will appear in the next words, chap. ii. 1. where, in opposition to these, he presseth those duties which Christians in their particular places and relations (as becometh holiness) ought to perform. A good Christian and a disobedient wife, a godly man and an unfaithful servant, or undutiful child, are contradictions that can never be reconciled. He that walks not uprightly in his house, is but an hypocrite at church. He that is not a Christian in his shop, is not in his closet a Christian, though

upon his knees in prayer. Wound religion in one part, and 'tis felt in every part. If it declines one way, it cannot thrive in any other. All that miscarry in religion, do not the same way miscarry. As it is in the regard of our natural life, some ('tis observed) die upwards, some downwards: in one, the extreme parts; his feet are first dead, and so creeps up to the legs, and so at last takes hold on the vitals; in another, his superior parts are first invaded. Thus in profession, some, their declining appears first in a negligence of duties about their particular callings and duties they owe by their place and relation to man, who all this while seem very forward and zealous in the duties of worship to God, much in hearing, praying, and such like: others faulter first in these, and at the same time seem very strict in the other; both destructive alike to the soul, they both meet in the ruin of the power of godliness. He stands orderly that makes conscience of the whole duty that lies on him in his place to God or man.

Thirdly, To stand orderly, it is requisite that we keep the bounds of our place and calling. The Israelites were commanded *to pitch every man by his own standard*, Numb. ii. 2. The Septuagint translates it, *kata tagma*, according to order. God allows no stragglers from their station in his army of saints. *As the Lord calleth every man, so let him walk*, 1 Cor. vii. 17.—Our walk must be in that path which our call beats out. We are therefore commanded every one *to do his own business*, 1 Thess. iv. 11. That which is the commander's business in an army, is not the private soldier's; the magistrate's, not the subject's; the minister's, not the people's. That which is justice in the ruler, is murder in another. They are our own things, that come within the compass of our general or particular calling; out of these, we are out of our diocese. O what a quiet world should we have, if every thing and person knew his own place! if the sea kept its own place, we should have no inundations; if men had theirs, we should neither have seen such floods of sin, nor miseries, as this unhappy age has been almost drowned with.—But it must be a strong bank indeed, that can contain our fluid spirits within our own terms. Peter himself was sharply chid, for prying out of curiosity into that which concerned him not. *What is that to thee?* John xxi. 22.; as if Christ had said, Peter, meddle with thy own matters, this concerns not thee; which sharp rebuke (saith one) might possibly make Peter afterwards give so strict a charge against, and set so black a brand upon this very sin, as you may find, 1 Pet. iv. 15. where he ranks the busy-body among murderers and thieves.

Now to fix every one in his place, and persuade all to stand orderly there without breaking their rank, these five considera-

tions

tions (methinks) may carry some weight, among those especially with whom the word of God in the scripture yet keeps its authority, to conclude and determine their thoughts.

1. Consider, What thou doest out of thy place is not acceptable to God, because thou canst not do it in faith, *without which it is impossible to please God;* and it cannot be in faith, because thou hast no call. God will not thank thee for doing that which he did not set thee about; possibly thou hast good intentions; so had Uzzah in staying the ark; yet how well God liked his zeal, see 2 Sam. vi. 7. Saul himself could make a fair story of his sacrificing, but that served not his turn. It concerns us, not only to ask ourselves, what the thing is we do; but also, who requireth this at our hands? To be sure, God will at last put us upon that question, and it will go ill with us, if we cannot shew our commission. So long we must needs neglect what is our duty, as we are busy about that which is not. The spouse confesseth this, Cant. i. 6. *They made me the keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept.* She could not mind theirs and her own too; our own iron will cool while we are beating another's. And this must needs be displeasing to God, to leave the work God sets us about, to do that he never commanded. When a master calls a truantly scholar to account, that hath been missing some days from school, would this be a good plea for him to tell his master, that he was all this while in such a man's shop at work with his tools? No sure, his business lay at school, not in that shop.

2. By going out of our proper place and calling, we put ourselves from under God's protection: The promise is, He will keep us in *all our ways*, Psal. xci. 11. When we go out of our way, we go from under his wing. We have an excellent place for this, 1 Cor. vii. 24. *Let every one wherein he is called, therein abide with God.* Mark the phrase, *abide with God.* As we love to walk in God's company, we must abide in our place and calling; every step from that is a departure from God; and better to stay at home in a mean place, and low calling, wherein we may enjoy God's sweet presence, than go to court, and there live without him. 'Tis like you have heard of that holy Bishop, that in a journey fell into an inn; and by some discourse with the host, finding him to be an atheist, or very atheistical, presently calls for his servant to bring him his horse, saying, He would not lodge there, for God was not in that place. Truly when thou art in any place, or about any work, to which thou art not called, we may safely say, God is not in that place, or enterprize; and what a bold adventure is it to stay there, where you cannot expect his presence to assist, or protect? *As a bird that wandereth from her nest, so is a man that wandereth from his place,* Prov. xxvii.

8. God took special care, that the *bird sitting over her eggs in her nest* should not be hurt, Deut. xxii. 6. but we find nothing to secure her, if found abroad. In doing the duty of our place, we have heaven's word for our security; but upon our own peril be it if we wander; then we are like Shimei out of his precincts, and lay ourselves open to some judgment or other: It is alike dangerous to do what we are not called to, and to neglect or leave undone the duty of our place. As the earth could not bear Corah's usurpation of what belonged not to them, but swallowed them up: So the sea could not but bear witness against Jonah the runaway prophet, disdaining to waft him, that fled from his place and work that God called him to. Nay, heaven itself would not harbour the angels, when once they left their own place and office that their Maker had appointed; so those words, Jude vi. *apolipontai to idion oinethrion*, I find most probably interpreted. The ruin of many souls breaks in upon them at this door. First, they break their ranks, and then they are led further into temptation. Absalom first looks over the hedge in his ambitious thoughts, a king he would be; and this wandering desire beyond his place, lets in those bloody sins, rebellion, incest, and murder, and these ripened him for, and at last delivered him into the hand divine vengeance. The apostle joins order and stedfastness together, Col. ii. 5. *I am with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and stedfastness of your faith.* If an army stands in close order, every one in his place attending his duty, content with his work, 'tis impregnable in a manner. How came many in our days to fall from their stedfastness, but by breaking their order!

3. We shall never be charged for not doing another's work.—*Give an account of thy stewardship*, Luke xvi. 2. that is, of what by thy place thou wert intrusted with. We may indeed be accessary to another's sin and miscarriage in his place. *Be not partakers with them*, saith the apostle, Ephes. v. 7. There is a partnership (if not very watchful) that we may have with other sins, and therefore we may say *Amen* to that holy man's prayer, *Lord, forgive me my other sins.* Merchants can trade in bottoms that are not their own, and we may sin with other men's hands, many ways, and one especially is, when we do not lend our brother that assistance in his work and duty, which our place and relation obligeth to; but it is not our sin, that we do not supply others negligence, by doing that which belongs not to our place. We are to pray for magistrates that they may rule in the fear of God; but if they do not, we may not step upon the bench, and do his work for him. God requires no more than faithfulness in our place. We do not find fault with an apple-tree, if it be laden with apples (which is the fruit of its kind), though we can find

find no figs or grapes growing on it; we expect these only from their proper root and stock. He is a fruitful tree in God's orchard, that brings forth *his* fruit in his season, Psal. i. 3.

4. There is poor comfort in suffering for doing that which was not the work of our place and calling. Before we launch out into any undertaking, it behoves us to ask ourselves, and that seriously, what our tackling is, if a storm should overtake us in our voyage. It is folly to engage in that enterprize, which will not bear us out, and pay the charge of all the loss and trouble it can put us to. Now, no comfort or countenance from God can be expected in any suffering, except we can entitle him to the business we suffer for. *For thy sake are we killed all the day long*, saith the church, Psal. xliv. 22. But if suffering finds us out of our calling and place, we cannot say, *for thy sake* we are thus and thus afflicted, but for our own sakes; and you know the proverb, *self-do, self-have.* The apostle makes a vast difference between suffering as a *busy-body*, and suffering as a *Christian*, 1 Pet. iv. 15, 16. It is to the latter he saith, *let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf;* as for the busy body, he mates him with thieves and murderers; and those, I trow, have reason both to be ashamed and afraid. The carpenter that gets a cut or wound on his leg from his axe, as he is at work in his calling, may bear it more patiently and comfortably, than one that is wantonly meddling with his tools, and hath nothing to do with such work. When affliction or persecution overtakes the Christian travelling in the way God hath set him in, he may shew the bible, as that *holy man* (suffering for Christ) did, and say, *This hath made me poor, this hath brought me to prison;* that is, his faith on the truths, and obedience to the commands in it; and therefore may confidently expect to suffer at God's cost, as the soldier to be kept and maintained by his prince, in whose service he hath lost his limbs. But the other that runs out of his place, and so meets with sufferings, he hath this to imbitter them, that he can look for nothing from God, but to be soundly chid for his pains, as the child is served, that gets some hurt while he is gadding abroad, and when he comes home at night with his battered face, meets with a whipping from his father, into the bargain, for being from home. This lay heavy on the spirit of that learned German, Johannes Funccius, who, of a minister of the gospel in his prince's court, turned minister of state to his prince; and was at last, for some evil counsel (at least so judged), condemned to die. Before he suffered, he much lamented the leaving of his calling, and to warn others, left this distich:

To keep thy place and calling learn of me,
Flee as a plague a meddler for to be.

5. It is a wandering spirit that usually carries men out of their place and calling. I confess there is an impulse which some of the servants of God have had from heaven, to do things extraordinary, as we read in scripture of Moses, Gideon, Phineas, and others: but it is dangerous to pretend to the like, and unlawful to expect such immediate concessions from heaven now, when he issueth them out in a more ordinary way, and gives rules for the same in his word. We may as well expect to be taught extraordinarily, without using the ordinary means, as to be called so.—When I see any miraculously gifted, as the prophets and apostles, then I shall think the immediate calling they pretend to is authentic. To be sure, we find, in the word, extraordinary calling and extraordinary teaching go together. Well, let us see what that wandering spirit is which carries many out of their place and calling. It is not always the same; sometimes it is idleness.—First, men neglect what they should do, and then are easily persuaded to meddle with what they have nothing to do. The apostle intimates this plainly, 1 Tim. v. 13. *They learn to be idle, wandering from house to house, and not only idle, but busy bodies.* An idle person is a gadder; he hath his foot on the threshold, easily drawn from his own place, and as soon into another's diocese. He is at leisure to hear the devil's chat. He that will not serve God in his own place; the devil, rather than he shall stand out, will send him of his errand, and get him to put his sickle into another's corn. Secondly, It is pride and discontent that make persons go out of their place; some men are in this very unhappy; their spirits are too big and haughty for the place God hath set them in. Their calling, may be, is mean and low, but their spirits high and towering; and whereas they should labour to bring their hearts to their condition, they project how they may bring their condition to their proud hearts. They think themselves very unhappy while they are shut up in such straight limits; indeed the whole world is too narrow a walk for a proud heart; the world was but a little ease to Alexander: Shall they be hid in a crowd, lie in an obscure corner, and die before they let the world know their worth? No, they cannot brook it, and therefore they must get on the stage, and put themselves forth one way or other. It was not the priests' work that Corah and his accomplices were so in love with, but the priests' honour which attended the work; this they desired to share, and liked not to see others run away with it from them; nor the zeal that Absalom had to do justice, which made his teeth water so after his father's crown, this must silver over his ambition. These places of church and state are such fair flowers, that proud spirits in all ages have been ambitious to have them set in their own garden; though they never thrive so well as in their

their proper soil. In a third, it is unbelief: this made Uzzah stretch forth his hand unadvisedly to stay the ark that shook, which being not a Levite, he was not to touch. See Numb. iv. 15. Alas! good man, it was his faith shook more dangerously than the ark: by fearing the fall of this, he fell to the ground himself. God needs not our sin to prop up his glory, truth, or church. Lastly, in some it is misinformed zeal: many think they may do a thing, because they can do it. They can preach, and therefore they may; wherefore else have they gifts? Certainly the gifts of the saints need not be lost, any of them, though they be not laid out in the minister's work. The private Christian hath a large field wherein he may be serviceable to his brethren; he need not break the hedge which God hath set, and thereby occasion such disorder as we see to be the consequence of this. We read in the Jewish law, Exod. xxii. that he who set a hedge on fire, and that fire burnt the corn standing in a field, was to make restitution, though he only fired the hedge (perhaps not intending to hurt the corn); and the reason was, because his firing the hedge was the occasion of the corn being burnt, though he meant it not. I dare not say, that every private Christian who hath in these times taken upon him the minister's work, did intend to make such a combustion in the church, as hath been, and still sadly is among us. God forbid I should think so! But, O that I could clear them from being accessary to it, in that they have fired the hedge which God hath set between the minister's calling and people's. If we will acknowledge the ministry a particular office in the church of Christ (and this I think the word will compel us to do), then we must also confess it is not any one's work (though ever so able) except called to the office. There are many in a kingdom to be found, that could do the prince's errand perhaps as well as his ambassador; but none takes the place, but he that is sent, and can shew his letters credential.—Those that are not sent and commissioned by God's call for ministerial work, they may speak truths as well as they that are; yet of him that acts by virtue of his calling, we may say that he preacheth with authority, and not like those who can shew no commission, but what the opinion themselves have of their own abilities gives them. Dost thou like the minister's work? why shouldst thou not desire the office, that thou mayest do the work acceptably? Thou dost find thyself gifted, as thou thinkest, for the work; but were not the church more fit to judge so than thyself? and if thou shouldst be found so by them appointed for the trial, who would not give thee the right hand of fellowship? There are not so many labourers in Christ's field, but thy help (if able) would be accepted; but as now thou actest, thou bringest thyself into suspicion in the thoughts of sober Christians; as he would justly do,

who comes into the field, where his prince hath an army, and gives out, he comes to do his sovereign service against the common enemy, yet stands by himself at the head of a troop he hath got together, and refuseth to take any commission from his prince's officers, or join himself with them: I question whether the service such a one can perform (should he mean as he says, which is to be feared), would do so much good, as the distraction, which this his carriage might cause in the army, would do hurt.

CHAP. III.

Wherein is contained the third and last Importance of the Word Stand; *and the Christian's Duty of standing on his Watch spoken to; why he is to watch, and how he should.*

THIRDLY, *to stand*, is here opposed to *sleep* and *sloth*; standing is a waking, watchful posture; when the captain sees his soldiers lying secure upon the ground asleep, he bids *stand to your arms*, that is, stand and watch. In some cases it is death for a soldier to be found asleep, as when he is appointed to stand centinel, or the like; now to sleep, deserves death, because he is to wake that the whole army may sleep; and his sleep may cost them their lives; therefore a great captain thought he gave that soldier but his due, whom he run through with his sword, because he found him asleep when he should have stood centinel, excusing his severity with this, that he left him but as he found him: *I found him dead in sleep, and left him but asleep in death.* Watchfulness is more needful for the Christian soldier than any other, because that other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian's grand enemy, satan, is ever awake and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprize. And if satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep, that is, secure and careless. The Christian is seldom worsted by this his enemy, but there is treachery or negligence in the business; either the unregenerate part betrays him, or his grace is not wakeful to make a timely discovery of him, so as to prepare for the encounter; the enemy is upon him before he is thoroughly awake to draw his sword. The saint's sleeping time is satan's tempting time; every fly dares venture to creep on a sleeping lion. No temptation so weak, but strong enough to foil a Christian that is napping in security. Sampson asleep, and Dalilah cut his locks: Saul asleep, and the spear is taken away from his very side, and he never the wiser:

wiser: Noah asleep, and his graceless son has a fit time to discover his father's nakedness: Eutychus asleep, nods, and falls from the third loft, and is taken up for dead. Thus the Christian, asleep in security, may soon be surprized so as to lose much of his spiritual strength; *the joy of the Lord,* which is *his strength;* be robbed of his spear, his armour, graces I mean, at least in the present use of them, and his nakedness discovered by graceless men, to the shame of his profession; as, when bloody Joab could take notice of David's vain-glory in numbering the people, was not David's grace asleep? Yea, he may fall from a high loft of profession, so low, into such scandalous practices, that others may question whether there be any life of grace indeed in him.— And therefore it behoves the Christian to stand wakefully; sleep steals insensibly on the soul, as it doth on the body. The wise virgins fell asleep as well as the foolish, though not so soundly; take heed thou dost not indulge thyself in thy lazy distemper, but stir up thyself to action, as we bid one that is drowsy, stand up, or walk. Yield to it by idleness and sloth, and it will grow upon thee; bestir thyself in this duty, and that, and it will be over. David first awakes his tongue to sing, his hand to play on his harp, and then David's heart awakes also, Psal. li. 8. The lion ('tis said) when he first wakes, lashes himself with his tail, thereby to stir and rouse up his courage, and then away he goes after his prey: We have enough to excite and provoke us to use all the care and diligence possible.

First, The Christian's work is too curious to be done well between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill, and slumbered over, no matter how. He had need be awake that walks upon the brink of a deep river, or brow of a steep hill.— The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that calls for both a nimble eye to discern, and a steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Scylla and Charybdis, two extremes, alike dangerous. Faith, the great work of God, cuts its way between the mountain of presumption, and gulf of despair; patience, a grace so necessary that we cannot be without it a day, except we would be all that while beside ourselves. This keeps us that we fall neither into the sleepy apoplexy of a blockish stupidity, which deprives the creature of its senses; nor into a raging fit of discontent, which hath sense enough, and too much, to feel the hand of God, but deprives the man of his reason, that he turns again upon God, and shoots back the Almighty's arrows on his fiery face, in the fury of his froward spirit. The like we might say of the rest. No truth but hath some error next door to her; no duty can be performed without approaching very near the enemies quarters, who soon takes the alarm, and comes out

to

to oppose the Christian; and ought he not then to have always his heart on the watch?

Secondly, The trouble of watching is not comparable to the advantage it brings.

1. By this, thou frustratest the designs satan hath upon thee: It is worth watching to keep the house from robbing, much more the heart from rifling by the devil. *Watch, that ye enter not into temptation*, Mat. xxvi. 51. He buys his sleep dear, that pays his throat-cutting for it; yea, though the wound be not so deep, but may be cured at last. Thy not watching one night may keep thee awake many a night upon a more uncomfortable occasion. And hadst thou not better awake with care, to keep thyself from a mischief, then afterward thy eyes be held open (whether thou wilt or not) with pain and anguish of the wound given thee in thy sleep? You know how sadly David was bruised by a fall got in his spiritual slumber; (for what else was he, when in the eventide he rose from his bed, and walked upon the roof of his house, like a man walking in his sleep? 2 Sam. xi. 2.), and how many restless nights this brought over this holy man's head, you may perceive by his own mournful complaints of this sin, which is the foot and sad burthen of several mournful psalms.

2. By thy watchfulness thou shalt best learn the evil of a sleepy state; one asleep is not sensible of his own snoring, how uncomely and troublesome to others it is, but he that is awake is apprehensive of both. The man asleep is not sensible, if laid naked by some that would abuse him; but he that is awake, observes, is ashamed, and covers him; thus while thou art in a spiritual sense awake, thou canst not but observe many uncomely passes in the lives of those professors, who do not watch their hearts, which will fill thy heart with pity to them, to see how they are abused by satan and their own passions, which, like rude servants, take this their own time to play their pranks in, when they have made sure of their mistress (grace, I mean, now laid asleep), that should keep them in better rule: Yea, it will make the blood come into thy face for shame, to see how, by their nakedness, profession itself is flouted at by them that pass by, and see how it is with them. Well, what thou blushest to see, and pitiest to find in another, take heed it befal not thyself; if thou sufferest a spiritual slumber to grow upon thee, thou wilt be the man thyself that all this may come upon, and what not besides? Sleep levels all: the wise man then is no wiser than a fool, to project for his safety; nor the strong man better than the weak, to defend himself; if slumber falls once upon thy eye, it is night with thee, and thou art (though the best of saints) but as other men, so far as this sleep prevails over thee.

3. By thy watchfulness thou shalt invite such company in unto thee,

thee, as will make the time short, and sweet, and that is thy dear Saviour, whose sweet communication and discourse about the things of thy Father's kingdom, will make that thou shalt not grudge the ease sleepy Christians get, with the loss of such an heavenly entertainment as thou enjoyest. Who had not (that loves his soul better than his body) rather have David's songs, than David's sleep, in the night? And who had not rather have Christ's comforting presence with a waking soul, than his absence with a sleepy slothful one? 'Tis the watchful soul that Christ delights to be with, and open his heart unto. We do not choose that for the time of giving our friends a visit, when they are asleep in their beds; nay, if we be with them, and perceive they grow sleepy, we think it is time to leave them to their pillow; and verily Christ doth so too. Christ withdraws from the spouse, till she be better awake, as a fitter time for her to receive his loves. Put the sweetest wine into a sleepy man's hand, and you are like to have it spilt; yea, put a purse of gold into his hand, and the man will hardly remember in the morning what you gave him over-night. Thus in the sleepy state of a soul, both the Christian loseth the benefit, and Christ the praise of his mercy; and therefore Christ will stay to give out his choice favours when the soul is more wakeful, that he may both do the creature good, and the creature may speak good of him for it.

Quest. But how must the Christian stand upon his watch?

Answ. First, *constantly.* The lamp of God in the *tabernacle* was to *burn always,* Exod. xxvii. 20. and xxx. 8. that is, always in the night, which sense is favoured by several other places. And I pray, what is our life in this world but a dark night of temptation? Take heed, Christian, that thy watch-candle go not out in any part of this darksome time, lest thy enemy come upon thee in that hour. He can find thee, but thou not resist him in the dark; if once thy eye be shut in a spiritual slumber, thou art a fair mark for his wrath; and know, thou canst not be long off thy watch, but the devil will hear of it. The devil knew the apostles' sleeping time, and then he desires leave to winnow them, Luke xxii. He saw they were in some disorder, the eye of their soul began to be heavy; the thief riseth when honest men go to bed. The devil, I am sure, begins to tempt when saints cease to watch; when the staff is thrown away, then the wolf appears. When the soul puts her danger farthest off, and lies most secure, then 'tis nearest; therefore labour to be constant in thy holy care; the want of this spoils all. Some you shall have, that after a great fall into a sin that hath bruised them sorely, will seem very careful for a time where they set their foot, how they walk, and what company they come in; but as soon as the soreness of their consciences wears off, their watch breaks up, and they

they are as careless as ever; like one that is very careful to shut up his shop strongly, and may sit up late to watch it also, for two or three nights after it hath been robbed, but then minds it no more. Others, in an affliction, or newly come out of the furnace, O how nice and scrupulous are they, while the smell of fire is about them, and memory of their distress fresh! They are as tender of sinning, as one that comes out of a hot close room is of the air; they shrink at every breath of temptation stirring. But alas! how soon are they hardened to commit those sins without remorse, the bare motion of which, but a little before, did so trouble and afflict them? Josephus, in his Antiquities, tells us, that the sons of Noah, for some years after the flood, dwelt on the tops of high mountains, not daring to take up their habitation in the lower ground, for fear of being drowned by another flood; yet in the process of time (seeing no flood came) they ventured down to the plain of Shinur, where their former fear we see ended in one of the boldest, proudest attempts against God, that the sun was ever witness to; the building, I mean, of a tower whose top should reach heaven, Gen. ix. 2. 3. They, who at first were so maidenly and fearful as not to venture down their hills, for fear of drowning, now have a design to secure themselves against all future attempts from the God of heaven himself. Thus oft we see God's judgments leave such an impression in men's spirits, that for a while they stand aloof from their sins (as they on their hills) afraid to come down to them; but when they see fair weather continue, and no clouds gather towards another storm, then they can descend to their old wicked practices, and grow more bold and heaven-daring than ever. But if thou wilt be a Christian indeed, keep on thy watch still, remit not in thy care; thou hast well run hitherto; O lie not down (like some lazy traveller) by the way side to sleep, but reserve thy resting time till thou gettest home out of all danger. Thy God rested not till the last day's work in the creation was finished; neither do thou cease to wake or work, till thou canst say thy salvation-work is finished.

Secondly, watch *universally;* First, watch thy *whole man.*— The honest *watchman* walks the rounds, and compasseth the whole town. He doth not limit his care to this house or that.— So do thou watch over thy whole man. A pore in thy body is a door wide enough to let in a disease, if God command; and any one faculty of thy soul, or member of thy body, to let in an enemy that may endanger thy spiritual welfare. Alas, how few set the watch round? some one faculty is not guarded, or member of the body not regarded. He that is scrupulous in one, you shall find him secure in another: may be, thou settest a watch at the door of thy lips, that no impure communication offends the ears

of

men; but how is the *Lord's watch* kept at the temple door of thy heart? 2 Chron. xxiii. 6. Is not that defiled with lust? Thou (may be) keepest thy hand out of thy neighbour's purse, and foot from going on a thievish errand to thy neighbour's house: but does not thy envious heart grudge him what God allows him? When thou prayest, thou art very careful thy outward posture be reverend; but what eye hast thou on thy soul, that it performs its part in the duty? Secondly, watch *in every thing*: If the apostle bids *in every thing give thanks*, then it behoves us *in every thing to watch*, that God may not lose his praise, which he doth in most, for want of watching. No action so little (almost) but we may in it do God, or the devil, some service, and therefore none too little for our care to be bestowed on. He was a holy man indeed, of whom it was said, *that he ate and drank eternal life.* The meaning is, he kept such holy watch over himself in these things, that he was in heaven while doing them. There is no creature so little among all God's works, but his providence watcheth over it, even to a sparrow, and a hair. Let there be no word or work of thine, over which thou art not watchful. Thou shalt be judged by them, even to thy idle words and thoughts, and wilt thou not have care of them?

Thirdly, watch *wisely*; which thou shalt do, if thou knowest where thou shouldst keep strictest watch, and that must be first in the weightiest duty of the command; *tything of cummin and anise* must not be neglected, but take heed thou doest not neglect the weightiest things of the law, *judgment*, *mercy*, and *faith*, Mat. xxiii. 23, making your preciseness in the less, a blind for your horrible wickedness in the greater.

Begin at the right end of your work (Christian), by placing your chief care about those main duties to God and man, in his law and gospel, in his worship, and in thy daily course, which, when thou hast done, neglect not the circumstantials; should a master, before he goes forth, charge his servant to look to his child, and trim his house up handsomely against he comes home; when he returns, will he thank his servant for sweeping his house, and making it trim (as he bade him), if he finds his child, through his negligence, fallen into the fire, and by it killed or crippled? No, sure; he left his child with him as his chief care, to which the other should have yielded, if both could not be done. There hath been a great zeal of late among us, about some circumstantials of worship; but who looks to the little child, the main duties of Christianity I mean? Was there ever less love, charity, self-denial, heavenly-mindedness, or the power of holiness in any of its several walks, than in this sad age of ours? alas, these, like the child, are in great danger of sharing in the fire of contention and division, which a perverse zeal in less things hath kindled among

among us. Secondly, Be sure thou beest watchful more than ordinary over thyself, in those things where thou findest thyself weakest, and hast been oftenest foiled. The weakest part of the city needs the strongest guard, and in our bodies the tenderest part is most observed, and kept warmest. And I should think it were strange, if thy fabrick of grace stands so strong and even, that thou shouldst not soon perceive which side needs the prop most, by some inclination of it one way more than another. The body is not so firm, but thou findest this humour over-abound, and that part craze faster than another; and so mayest thou in thy soul. Well, take counsel in the thing, and what thou findest weakest watch most carefully. Is it thy head that is weak, thy judgment I mean? Watch thyself, and come not among those that drink no wine but that which thy weak parts cannot bear, (seraphic notions, and high-flown opinions), and do not think thyself much wronged to be forbidden their cup; such strong wine is more heady than hearty, and they that trade most with it, are not found of the healthiest tempers of their souls, no more than they that live most of strong-water, are for their bodies. Is thy impotency in thy passions? Indeed we are weak, as they are strong and violent. Now watch over them, as one that dwells in a thatched house would do of every spark that flies out of his chimney, lest it should light on it, and set all on fire. O take heed what speeches come from thy mouth, or from any thou conversest with; this is the little instrument that sets the whole course of nature in a flame; when our neighbour's house is on fire, we cast water on our roof, or cover it with a wet sheet; when the flame breaks out at another's mouth, now look thou throwest water on thy own hot spirit; some cooling, wrath-quenching scriptures and arguments ever carry with thee for that purpose; and so in any other particular, as thou findest thy weakness.

CHAP. I.

VERSE 14. *Having your loins girt about with Truth.*

THE Apostle having ordered the Ephesians, and in them every Christian, the posture which they are to observe in fight with their enemy; he comes now to instance in the several pieces of that armour, which before he had commanded to them only in general. The *first* of which is the *girdle of truth.*

Wherein

Wherein is contained a brief Explication of the Words.

HAVING your Loins girt about with truth. A twofold inquiry is here requisite. First, what he means by *Truth.*— Secondly, what by *loins*, and their being girt with truth.

First, for the first. What is *truth* here? Some by *truth* understand Christ, who indeed elsewhere is called the *truth;* yet in this place I conceive, not so properly, because the apostle instanceth here in several pieces and parts of armour, one distinct from another, and Christ cannot so well be said to be a single piece to defend this or that part, as the whole, in whom we are complete; compared therefore, Rom. xiii. to the whole suit of armour, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus*, that is, be clothed and harnessed with Christ as a soldier with his armour cap-a-pee. Some by *truth*, mean *a truth of doctrine;* others will have it truth of heart, *sincerity;* they I think best, that comprise both. And so I shall handle it; both indeed are required to make the girdle complete; one will not do without the other. 'Tis impossible to find good meanings, and a kind of sincerity without, yea, against the *truth*. Many follow an error, as they Absalom, in the simplicity of their hearts. Such do ill while they mean well. Good intentions do no more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the *Christian Church*, though he thought (no question) he did him good service therein. Neither is it enough to have *truth* on our side, if we have not truth in our hearts. Jehu was a great stickler against idolatry, but kicked down all again by his hypocrisy. Both then are necessary; *sincerity* to propound a right end; and knowledge of the word of *truth*, to direct us in the right way to that end.

Secondly, What is meant here by loins that art to be girt with this girdle. The loins must be like the girdle. This is spiritual, and therefore they must be so. Peter will help to interpret Paul; *Gird up the loins of your minds,* 1 Pet. i. 13. They are our minds and spirits which must wear this girdle, and very fitly may our spirits and minds be compared to the loins. The loins are the chief seat of bodily strength. Of Behemoth it is said, Job xl. 6. *His strength is in his loins.* The loins are to the body, as the *keel to the ship.* The whole ship is knit to that, and sustained by it; and the body to the loins; if the loins fail, the whole body sinks; hence to *smite through the loins*, is a phrase to express destruction and ruin, Deut. xxxiii. 11. weak loins, and a weak man; if we be but a little weary, nature directs us to lay our hands on our loins and sustain them, as our chief strength: Thus as the actings of our minds and spirits are in the faculties

and

and powers, so we are weak or strong Christians; if their understanding be clear in its apprehensions of truth, and the will sincere, vigorous, and fixt in its purposes, for that which is holy and good, then he is a strong Christian: But if the understanding be dark, or uncertain in its notions (as a distempered eye that cannot well discern its object), and the will be wavering and unsteady (like a needle that trembles between two loadstones) not able to bring its thoughts to an issue, which to close with, here the man is weak, and all he doth will be so. Feeble spirits cause an intermitting faultering pulse; so want of strength in the mind, to know the truth, and resolution in the will to pursue that which he knows to be holy and good, causeth a man to faulter in his course. The use therefore of these two, *truth of doctrine* for the mind, and *sincerity* for the will, is to unite and establish both these faculties, which they do when they are clasped and girt about the soul, as the girdle about the loins of the body. Though the loins be the strength of the body, yet they need an auxiliary, their strength from the girdle to keep those parts close, and unite their force, without which, men, when they would strain themselves, and put forth their strength in any work, find a trembling and looseness in their loins. Hence the *shaking of the loins*, is a phrase to express weakness, Psal. lxix. 23. Thus our minds and spirits need this girdle to strengthen them in every work we do, or else we shall act nothing vigorously.

First, We shall begin with *truth of doctrine*, or truth of the word, called *the word of truth*, Ephes. i. 13. because it is the word of God, who is the God of truth. It behoves every Christian to be well girt with this truth. *Resist the devil* (saith Peter) *stedfast in the faith*, 1 Pet. v. 9. that is, in the *truth*, faith being there but for the object of our faith, which is the *truth* of God, declared in the doctrine of the gospel; this is *the faith which was once delivered to the saints*, Jude x. that is, the truth delivered to them to be believed and held fast. And of what importance it is to be thus stedfast in the faith, the apostle Peter, in the following verse of the aforementioned place, shews, by his vehement and earnest praying for them, that God would *stablish, strengthen, and settle them*. The heaping of words to the same purpose, implies the great danger they were in, of being unsettled by satan, and his instruments, and the necessity of their standing firm and unshaken in the faith. Nothing is more frequently inculcated than this in the epistles, and the more because in those blustering times, it was impossible to have kept the faith from being blown from them, without this girdle to hold it fast. Now, as there is a double design satan hath to rob Christians of truth, so there is a twofold girding about with this truth necessary.

First,

First, Satan comes as a *serpent*, in the persons of false teachers, and by them labours to put a cheat on us, and cozen us with error for truth. To defend us against this design, it is necessary we be girt with truth in our understanding, that we have an established judgment in the truths of Christ.

Secondly, satan comes sometimes as a *lion*, in the persons of *bloody persecutors*, and labours to scare Christians from the truth with fire and faggot. Now to defend us against this, we need have truth girt about us, so that with a holy resolution we may maintain our profession in the face of death and danger. To begin with the first.

CHAP. II.

Wherein is shewn: It is the Christian's Duty to labour for a Judgment established in the Truth, with the Reasons of it; as also some Application of the Point.

IT should be the care of every Christian to get an established judgment in the truth. The Bereans are highly commended, for the inquiry they made into the scripture, to satisfy their judgments concerning the doctrine Paul preached. They did not believe hand over head; but their faith was the result of a judgment (upon diligent search) convinced by scripture evidence, Acts xvii. 11.; it is said there, *They searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.* They carried the preachers doctrine to the written word, and compared it with that; and mark, ver. 12. *Therefore many believed*; as they did not believe before, so they durst not but believe now. I remember Tertullian speaking of some hereticks, their manner of preaching, saith, *They teach by persuading, and not persuade by teaching:* that is, they woo and entice the affections of their hearers, without convincing of their judgment about what they preach. Indeed it were a hard work for the adulterer to convince her he would prostitute, that the fact is lawful; No, he goes another way to work; First, by some amorous insinuations he inveigles her affections, and they once bewitched, the other is not so much questioned, it being easy for the affections to make the judgment of their party. Well, though error, like a thief, comes thus in at the window; yet truth, like the owner of the house, delights to enter at the right door of understanding, from thence into the conscience, and so passeth into the will and affections. Indeed, he that hits upon truth, and takes up the profession of it, before he is brought into the acquaintance of its excellency, and heavenly

beauty, by his understanding, cannot entertain it becoming its heavenly birth and descent; 'tis as a prince that travels in disguise, not *known*, therefore not *honoured*. Truth is loved and prized only of those that know it; and not to desire to know it, is to despise it; as much as knowing it, to reject it. It were not hard sure to cheat that man of truth, who knows not what he hath. Truth and error are all one to the ignorant man, so it hath but the name of truth. Leah and Rachel were both alike to Jacob in the dark. Indeed, 'tis said, *In the morning, behold, it was Leah*, Gen. xxix. 25. So in the morning, when 'tis day in the understanding, then the deceived person will see he hath had a false bride in his bosom; will cry out, behold, 'tis an error which I took for a truth. You have, may be, heard of the covetous man, that hugged himself in the many bags of gold he had, but never opened them, or used them; when the thief took away his gold, and left him his bags full of pebbles in the room, he was as happy as when he had his gold, for he looked not of the one or other. And verily an ignorant person is in a manner no better with truth than error on his side: Both are alike to him; day and night, all one to a blind man.

But to proceed and give some more particular account, why the Christian should endeavour for an established judgment in the truth, I shall content myself with three reasons. The first taken from the damning nature of false doctrine; the second from the subtelty of seducers to draw into false doctrine; and the third, from the universal influence that an established doctrine hath on the whole man, and whole course of a Christian.

First, From the damning nature of false doctrines. They hunt for the precious life of souls, as well as any other sin. An impostume in the head proves oft as deadly as one in the stomach. A corrupt judgment in foundation-truths kills as sure as a rotten heart; indeed it proceeds thence. *Jezebel's children are threatened to be killed with death*, Rev. ii. 23.; and who are her children, but her disciples, that drink of her cup of fornication, and embrace her corrupt doctrines? But sure this is not believed by some, who, though very strict in their lives, and seem as tender in matters of morality as Lot was of his guests, yet are very loose in their principles and judgments, exposing them (as he his daughters) to be defiled with any corrupt doctrine that comes to their door. They would make us think, that here men played but at small games, and their souls were not at stake, as in other sins; as if there were not such a question to be asked at the great day, what opinions we held, and whether we were sound in the faith? In a word, as if false doctrines were but an innocent thing, not like the wild gourd, which brought death into the prophet's pot, 2 Kings iv. (turning wholesome food, with

which

which it was mingled, into baneful poison), but rather like herb John in the pot, that does neither much good nor hurt. Yea, there be some that speak out, and tell us, a man may be saved in any religion, so he doth but follow his light; and are not these charitable men, who, because they would have the company as few as may be that are damned, make as many roads to heaven, as the scriptures tell us there are ways to hell? Contrary to Christ, who tells us of no other way but by him to life, *I am the way, the truth, and the life.* John xiv. 6.: point blank against St. John, who tells us but of one doctrine, and that the doctrine of Christ; and he that holds not this, to be marked out for a lost man, 2 John, ver. 9. 10. *Whoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God;* and how far I pray is that man off hell, that hath not God? He that hath not God before he dies, the devil shall have him when he dies. Well, sirs, the time is coming, yea, it hastens (what favour and kindness soever corrupt doctrine find here at man's hand), wherein the obstinate heretic shall receive the same law at Christ's hands with the impenitent drunkard; you may see them both under the same condemnation, as they stand pinioned together for hell, Gal. v. 20, 21. *I tell you now* (saith the apostle), *as I have told you in times past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* And see, I pray you, if you cannot find the heretick's name among them; ignorance in fundamentals is damning, sure then error in fundamentals much more. If a pound weighs down the scale, there is no doubt then but a stone weight will do it. If the less sin presseth down to hell, how can we rationally think that the greater should escape it? Error stands at a farther distance from, yea, a fuller contrariety to truth, than ignorance. Error is ignorance with a dye on it. He that eats little or nothing, must needs die; much more he that eats rank poison. The apostle doth not only tell us of *pernicious doctrines*, and *damnable heresies*, but he tells us, they *bring swift damnation* upon those that hold them, 2 Pet. ii. 1. I pray observe what an accent he lays on the damnation that comes by these corrupt doctrines: he calls it *swift damnation.* All rivers find their way at last to the sea from whence they sprang, but some return with a more swift stream, and get sooner to it than others.—Would any make it a shorter voyage to hell than ordinary, let him throw himself but into this stream of corrupt doctrine, and he is not like to be long in going.

Secondly, Because impostors are so subtle, therefore it behoves the Christian to establish and strengthen his judgment in the truths of Christ. They are a generation of men, skilful to destroy the faith of others. There is an *erudita nequitia* in the world, as one calls it, a learned kind of wickedness, that some have to cor-

rupt the minds of men. The spirit of God sets them out to the life, sometimes comparing them to merchants, who can set a gloss upon their false ware with fine words, 2 Pet. ii. 3. They are said with *feigned words* to make *merchandize of souls*. To hucksters that blend, and dash their wine with water, 2 Cor. ii. 17. To cheating gamesters, that have a slight-of-hand to cogg the dye, Ephes. iv. 14. Yea, to witches themselves, Gal. iii. 1. *Who hath bewitched you?* saith the apostle. Strange things have been done in our days, on those that God has suffered them to practise their sorcery upon, and what counter-charm better than an established judgment? 'Tis observable, that, in 2 Tim. iii. where the apostle compares the seducers of that present age to those sorcerers, Jannes and Jambres, that resisted Moses, and shews what kind of persons they were that fell into their snare? *such as, though ever learning, yet never come to the knowledge of the truth*, ver. 7. Then he turns to Timothy, ver 10. *But thou hast fully known my doctrine*. As if he had said, I am out of fear for thee, thou art better grounded in the doctrine of the apostle, than to be thus cheated of it. Indeed, those whom seducers lie in wait for, are chiefly weak unsettled ones; for as Solomon saith, *In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird*, Prov. i. 17. The devil chose rather to assault Eve, than Adam, as more likely of the two to be catched. And ever since he takes the same course, he labours to creep over where the hedge is lowest, and the resistance like to be weakest. Three characters you may observe of those who are most commonly seduced. First, they are called, *simple ones*, Rom. xvi. 18. *By good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple:* such who mean well, but want wisdom to discern those that mean ill; incautious ones, that dare pledge every body, and drink of any one's cup, and never suspect poisoning. Secondly, *Children*, Eph. iv. 14. *Be no more children, tossed to and fro' with every wind of doctrine*. Now children are very credulous, prone to believe every one that gives them a parcel of fair words; they think any thing is good if it be sweet; it is not hard to make them eat poison for sugar; they are not swayed by principles of their own, but by others; the child reads, construes, and learns his lesson as his master saith, and thinks it therefore right. Thus, poor creatures, that have little knowledge of the world themselves, they are easily persuaded this or that way, even as those of whom they have a good opinion please to lead them; let the doctrine be but sweet, and it goes down glib; they, like Isaac, bless their opinions by feeling, not by sight; hence many poor creatures applaud themselves so much of the joy they have found since they were of this judgment, and that way, not being able to try the comfort and sweetness they feel, by the truth of their way, from the word,

word, they are fain to believe the truth of it by their feeling, and so, poor creatures, they bless error for truth. Thirdly, They are such as are unstable, 2 Pet. ii. 14. *beguiling unstable souls*, such as are not well grounded and principled. The truth they profess hath no anchor-hold in their understanding, and so they are at the mercy of the wind, soon set adrift, and carried down the stream of those opinions, which are the favourites of the present time, and are most cried up, even as the dead fish with the current of the tide.

Thirdly, We are to endeavour after an established judgment in the truth, because of the universal influence it hath upon the whole man. First, upon the memory, which is helped much by the understanding. The more weight is laid on the seal, the deeper impression is made on the wax. The memory is that faculty which carries the images of things. It holds fast what we receive, and is that treasury where we lay up what we desire afterwards to use and converse with. Now the more clear and certain our knowledge of any thing is, the deeper it sinks, and surer it is held by the memory. Secondly, upon the affections: Truth is a light; the more steady and fixed the glass of the understanding is, through which its beams are darted upon the affections, the sooner they take fire. *Did not our hearts burn*, (said the disciples) *within us, while he opened into us the scriptures?* Luke xxiv. 32. They had heard (no doubt) Christ preach much of what then he said before his passion, but never were they so satisfied and confirmed as now, when scriptures and understanding were opened together, and this made their hearts burn. The sun in the firmament sends his influence where he doth not shed his beams, I mean, into the bowels of the earth; but the Sun of Righteousness imparts his influence only where his light comes; he spreads the beams of truth into the understanding to enlighten that; and while the creature sits under these wings, a kindly heart-quickening heat is begot in its bosom. Hence we find, even when the spirit is promised as a comforter, he comes as a convincer, John xvi. 13.: he comforts by teaching. And certainly the reason why many poor trembling souls have so little heat of heavenly joy in their hearts, is, because they have so little light to understand the nature and tenor of the gospel-covenant. The further a soul stands from the light of truth, the further he must needs be from the heat of comfort. Thirdly, an established judgment hath a powerful influence upon the life and conversation. The eye directs the foot; he walks very unsafely that sees not his way; and he uncomfortably that is not resolved whether right or wrong. That which moves, must rest on something that doth not move: a man could not walk if the earth turned under his feet. Now the principles we have in our understandings are, as

it were, the ground we go upon in all our actions; if they stagger and reel, much more will our life and practice. It is as impossible for a shaking hand to write a straight line, as an unfixed judgment to have an even conversation. The apostle joins stedfastness and unmoveableness with *abounding in the work of the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. And if I mistake not, he means chiefly in that place, stedfastness of judgment, in that truth of the resurrection, which some had been shaking. It is not the many notions we have, but the establishment we have in the truth makes us strong Christians; as he is a strong man whose joints are well set together and knit, not he who is spun out at length, but not thickened suitable to his height. One saith well, Men are what they see and judge; though some do not fill up their light, yet none go beyond it. A truth under dispute in the understanding is, as I may so say, stopped in the head; it cannot commence in the heart, or become practicable in the life, but when it passeth clearly there, and upon its commendation is embraced in the will and affections, then it is held fast, and hath powerful effects in the conversation. The gospel (it is said) came to the Thessalonians in much *assurance*, 1 Thes. i. 6. *i. e.* evidence of its truth; and see how prevalent and operative it was, ver. 6. *Ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy in the Holy Ghost.* They were assured that the doctrine was of God; and this carried them merrily through the saddest afflictions which attended the same.

Use 1. First, To reprove those, that instead of endeavouring to establish their judgments in the truth, make it their greatest study how to strengthen themselves in their errors. I am persuaded some men take more pains to furnish themselves with arguments to defend some one error they have taken up, than they do for the most saving truths in the Bible; yea, they could sooner die at a stake to defend one error they hold, than all the truths they profess. Austin saith of himself when he was a Manichæan, *Thou, O Lord, wert not, but my error was my God.* O 'tis hard to reduce a person deeply engaged in the defence of an error; how oft had the Pharisees their mouths stopped by our Saviour! yet few or none reclaimed. Their spirits were too proud to recant. What, they lay down the bucklers, come down from Moses chair, and confess what they might have taught the people for an oracle, is now false! They will rather go on, and brave it out as well as they can, than come back with shame, though the shame was not to be ashamed of their error, but ashamed to confess it. The cynic answered smartly, who, coming out of a brothel-house, was asked, whether he was not ashamed to be seen coming out of such a naughty house?—No, the shame was to go in, but honesty to come out. O sirs, 'tis bad enough to fall into an error, but worse

worse to persist. The first shews thee a weak man; but the other makes thee too like the devil, who is to this day of the same mind he was at his first fall

Use 2. Secondly, It proves those who labour to unsettle the judgment of others, to ungird this belt about the Christian's loins. They come with the devil's question in their mouths, *Yea, hath God said?* Are you sure this is a truth? Do not your Ministers deceive you? Labouring slily to breed suspicions and jealousies in the hearts of Christians towards the truths they have received; such were they that troubled the Galatians, whom Paul wished to *cut off* for their pains, Gal. v. 12. They laboured to puzzle them, by starting scruples in their minds concerning the doctrine of the gospel. This is a cunning way at last to draw thee from the faith, and therefore they are called *subverters of the faith of others*, 2 Tim. ii. 14. Tit. i. 11. The house must needs be in danger, when the groundsels are loosened; can you think he means honestly, that undermines the foundation of your house? This they do, that would call in question the grand truths of the gospel: But this is a small fault in our loose age, or else so many seducers would not be suffered (whom I may call spiritual rogues and vagrants) to wander like gypsies up and down, bewitching poor simple souls to their perdition. O 'tis sad, that he who steals the worth of two or three shillings, should hold up his hand at the bar for his life, yea, sometimes hang for it; and that those who rob poor souls of the treasure of saving truths, and subvert the faith of whole families, should be allowed to lift up their heads with impudence, glorying in their impunity: that blasphemy against God should not bear an action, where blasphemy against the king is indicted for treason. It is well that God loves his truth better than men, or else these would escape in both worlds, but God hath declared himself against them. There is a day, when they who rob souls of truth, shall be found and condemned as greater felons, than they who rob houses of gold and silver.—See how God lays their indictment, Jer. xxiii. 30. *Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my word, every one from his neighbour.* He means the false prophets that enticed the people from those truths, which the faithful servants of God had delivered to them. There will be none on the bench to plead the blasphemer and seducer's cause, when God shall sit judge.

Use 3. Thirdly, This might well chastise the strange fickleness and unsettledness of judgment, which many labour with in this unconstant age. Truths in many professors minds, are not as stars fixed in the heavens, but like meteors, that dance in the air; they are not as characters engraven in marble, but writ in the dust, which every wind and idle breath of seducers deface; many en-

tertain opinions, as some entertain suitors, not that they mean to marry them, but cast them off as soon as new ones come. Never was there a more giddy age than ours. What is said of fashion-mongers, that some men, should they see their pictures in that habit which they wore a few years past, would hardly know themselves in their present, they would be found not the same men, is most true in regard of their opinions. Should many that have been great professors, take a view of their religious principles a dozen years ago, and compare them with the present, they would be found not the same men. They have so chopped and changed, that they seemed to have forsaken their old faith. Not that the old which they renounce was false, or the new which they espouse is true; but because they were either ignorant of the truth they first professed, or were insincere in the profession of it; and it is no wonder that the one should upon easy terms part with that, which he first took up on as weak grounds as now he leaves it; or that the other who did not love or improve the truth he professed, should be given up of God, to change it for an error. If the heathen (who did not glorify God with the light of nature they had) were righteously given up to a reprobate injudicious mind, to do that which was inconvenient, and morally absurd; then they who dishonour God with the revealed light of scripture-truth, much more deserve that they should be given up to that which is spiritually wicked, even to believe lies and errors for truth: A heavy curse, did we rightly judge of it, to wander and wilder in a maze of error, and yet think they are walking in the way of truth.

Quest. But may some say, How is it possible that ordinary professors should attain to this established judgment in the truth, when we see many of great parts and eminency, much unsettled in their judgments?

Answ. We must distinguish, first, of persons: secondly, of truths. First, of persons, there are many eminent for parts, whose parts want piety to establish them, and no wonder to see wanton wits unfixed in the truths of God. None sooner topple over into error, than those who have not an honest heart, to a nimble head. The richest soil without culture is most tainted with such weeds. They have been men of unsanctified parts, that have been the leaders in the way of error, though the more simple and weak that are led by them. They are knowing men, who first disgorge and vomit error from their corrupt hearts, and ignorant ones that lick it up. And therefore despair not of an established judgment so long as thou desirest to have an honest upright heart, and conscientiously usest the means. The promise is on thy side, Psal. cxi. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have they that do his commands.* Secondly,

Secondly, We must distinguish of truths, some are fundamental, others are superstructory; now though many eminent for piety, as well as parts, are in the dark concerning some of the superstructory and more circumstantial (because mysteriously laid down in the word), yet there is a sweet harmony among the godly in fundamentals. And in those, poor soul, thou mayest come, by a faithful use of means, to be established. As for our bodies, God hath so provided, that things necessary to preserve their life, are more common, and to be had at a cheaper rate, than things for delicacy and state. So also for our souls. If bread were as heard to come by as sweet-meats, or water as scarce as wine, the greatest part of men must needs famish; so if truths necessary to salvation, were as hard to be understood, and cleared from the scriptures, as some others, many poor weak-hearted Christians would certainly perish, without a miracle to help them. But the saving truths of the gospel lie plain, and run clear to all, but those who muddy the streams with their own corrupt minds.

CHAP. III.

Some Directions for the establishing the Judgment of Professors in the Truth.

Quest. BUT what counsel can you give me towards the establishing of my judgment in the truths of Christ?

Ans. 1. First, let thy aim be sincere in embracing of truths; a naughty heart, and an unsound judgment, like ice and water, are produced mutually by one another. The reason of the fickleness of some men's judgments proceeds from the guile of their hearts. A stable mind, and a double heart, seldom meet. That place speaks full to this, 1 Tim. i. 5. *The end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned,* (now mark what follows) ver. 6. *from which some having swerved,* (or as it is in the original) not aiming at, *have turned aside to vain jangling.* They never aimed at the power of holiness in receiving truth, that by it they might advance in their love, faith, and other graces; and taking a wrong end and aim, no wonder they turn out of the right way. A naughty heart can easily bribe the judgment, to vote on its side.—This shall be truth now, and no truth a month hence, if it please. That is truth with many, which serves their interest; they tie their judgment to their purse-strings, or preferments, &c. and such men are ready (with that weather-cock in Queen Mary's days) to sing a new song upon any change in their carnal concernments. When love receives a truth, it is held fast; but if lust after

after any worldly interest be the cause, then it may be packed away again, when the turn is served. Ammon was soon as sick of Tamar, as ever he was for her. And have we not in our days seen some truths and ordinances kicked away with as much scorn and contempt as he did her, and by those that have been sufficiently fond of them a few years past, but (to be feared) never truly in love with them.

Secondly, Attend on the ministry of the word. One great end of its appointment, is to establish us in truth, Ephes. iv. 11. *He gave some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the Saints.* And mark, v. 14. *That we henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro'*, &c. He that runs from his guide, will be soon out of his way. It is no small testimony that God hath given to his faithful ministers in this present age, that few leave them, but the leprosy of error appears soon on their forehead. And in thy waiting on the ministry of the word, be sure thou attendest to the doctrinal part of the sermon, as well as to the applicatory. The former is necessary to make thee a solid Christian, as the other is to make thee a warm Christian: Indeed, hot affections, without solid knowledge, are but like fire in the pan when the piece is not charged. The Levites, Neh. viii. 7. 8. we find, *gave the sentence of the law, and caused the people to understand it.* Planting goes before watering, and so should teaching before exhorting. And the same method people should learn in, that we are to preach in.

Thirdly, Enslave not thy judgment to any person or party.—There is a *spiritual suretyship* hath undone many in their judgments and principles: be not bound to, or for the judgment of any. Weigh truth, and tell gold thou mayest after thy father: Thou must live by thy own faith, not another's. Labour to see truth with thine own eyes. That building stands weak, which is held up by a prop, or some neighbour's house it leans on, rather than any foundation of its own; when these go, that will fall to the ground also: Let not authority from man, but evidence from the word, conclude thy judgment; that is but a prop, this a foundation. Quote the scripture rather than men for thy judgment.—Not, So saith such a learned holy man; but, Thus saith the holy scripture. Yet take heed of bending this direction too far the other way; which is done when we condemn the judgment of such, whose piety and learning might command reverence: There is sure a mean to be found betwixt defying men, and deifying them. It is admiring of persons that is the traitor to truth, and makes many cry *Hosanna* to error, and *crucify* to truth. Eusebius, out of Josephus, tells us of Herod (that Herod whom we read, Acts xii. to be eaten up of worms), his coming upon the theatre gorgeously clad, and that while he was making an eloquent oration to the people, the silver robe which he then wore did, by the reflex

reflex of the sun-beams shining on it, so glister, as dazzled the eyes of the spectators; and this (saith he) occasioned some flatterers to cry out, *The voice of God, and not of man.* And truly the glistering varnish which some men's parts and rhetorick put upon their discourses, does oft so blind the judgments of their admirers, that they are too prone to think all divine they speak; especially if they be such, whom God hath used as instruments for any good to the souls formerly. O 'tis hard then, to love and esteem man as man, to reverence such, so as not to be in danger of loving their errors also. Augustine had been a means to convert Alypius from one error, and he confesseth this was an occasion why he was so easily by him led into another error, no less than Manicheism; Alypius thought he could not prevent him here, that had converted him; call, therefore, none father on earth; despise none, adore none.

Fourthly, *Beware of curiosity.* He is half gone into error, that vainly covets novelties, and listens after every new-fangled opinion. We read of itching ears, 2 Tim. iv. 3. This itch commonly ends in a scab of error. Tamar lost her chastity by gadding; the chastity of the mind is its soundness in the faith: and this they are in danger to lose, who will go into all companies, and lend an ear to all doctrines that are preached. First, be a hearer, and then a disciple of them. Many indulge themselves so far in this curiosity of conversing with every sect and opinion, that at last they turn scepticks, and can settle upon nothing as truth. Augustine confesseth of himself, that he had gone through so many errors and delusions of the Manichees (which he once cried up for truths, but afterwards saw them abominable errors), that at last he was afraid of truth itself, which he heard Ambrose preach. *As* (saith he) *one that hath had experience of an unskilful physician, is at last afraid to put himself in the hands of him that is skilful.* O take heed that you who will now hear any thing, come not in the end that you will believe nothing.

Fifthly, *Humbly beg of God an established judgment.* No travellers lose their way sooner, than they who think they know it so well that they need not ask it; and no professors are in such danger of being drawn from the truth, as they who lean to their own understanding, and acknowledge not God in their way, by consulting with himself daily. Mark pride (however it may seem to soar,) hath such a mercy in store for them, they may with Nebuchadnezzar, *bless the Most High*, and acknowledge him at their return, whom they neglected so unworthily at their setting forth. O take heed therefore of pride, which will soon make thee a stranger at the throne of grace. Pride takes little delight in begging: it turns humble praying for truth into a busy stickling and ambitious disputing about truth; there is honour to be

be got here: and thus many, to get victory, have lost truth in the heat of the battle. Lay this deep in thy heart, that God, who gives an eye to see truth, must give a hand to hold it fast when we have it. What we have from God, we cannot keep without God; keep therefore thy acquaintance with God, or else truth will not keep her acquaintance long with thee. God is light; thou art going into the dark, as soon as thou turnest thy back on him. We stand at better advantage to find truth, and keep it also, when devoutly praying for it, than when fiercely wrangling and contending about it; disputes toil the soul, and raise the dust of passion; prayer sweetly composeth the mind, and lays the passions which disputes draw forth; and I am sure a man may see further in a still clear day, than in a windy and cloudy. When a person talks much, and rests little, we have great cause to fear his brain will not hold long.; and truly, when a person shall be much in talking and disputing about truth, without an humble spirit in prayer to be led into it, God may justly punish that man's pride with a spiritual frenzy in his mind, that he shall not know error from truth.

Sixthly, Look thou takest not offence at the difference of judgments and opinions that are found among the professors of religion. It is a stone which the papist throws (in these divided times especially) before our feet. How know you, saith he, which is truth, when there are so many judgments and ways amongst you? Some have so stumbled at this, that they have quit the truth they once professed, and by the storm of dissensions in matters of religion, have been, if not thrown upon the rock of atheism, yet driven to and fro' in a fluctuation of mind, not willing to cast anchor anywhere in their judgment, till they see this tempest over, and those that are scattered from one another by diversity of judgment, meet together in an unity, and joint consent of persuasions in matters of religion: A resolution, as one saith very well, as foolish and pernicious to the soul, if not more, than it would be to the body, if a man should vow he should not eat till all the clocks in the city should strike twelve just together; the latter might sooner be expected than the former.

Seventhly, Rest not till thou feelest the efficacy of every truth thou holdest in thy judgment, upon thy heart; one faculty helps another. The more clear truth is in the understanding, the more abiding in the memory; and the more operative truth is on the will, the more fixed in the judgment. Let a thing be ever so excellent, yet if a man can make little or no use thereof, it is little worth to him, and may easily be got from him. Thus many rare libraries have been parted with by rude soldiers (into whose hands they have fallen) for little more than their covers were worth, which would by some (that could have improved them) been kept

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as the highest prize. And verily, it fares with truth, according as they are in whose hands it falls: if it lights upon one that falls to work with it, and draws out the strength and sweetness of it, this man holds it so much faster in his judgment, by how much more operative it is on his heart: but if it meets with one that finds no divine efficacy it hath, to humble, comfort, sanctify him, it may soon be turned out of doors, and put to seek for a new host; such may for a time dance about that light, which a while after themselves will blow out. When I hear of a man, that once held original sin, and the universal pollution of man's nature, to be a truth, but now denies it, I cannot but fear, he did either never lay it so close to his heart, as to abase and humble him kindly for it; or that he grew weary of the work, and by sloth and negligence lost the efficacy of that truth in his heart, before he lost the truth itself in his judgment. I might instance in many other particulars, wherein professors in these slippery times have slid from their old principles. Singing of psalms hath been a duty owned and practised by many, who now have laid it down: and it were a question worth asking of them, whether formerly they never enjoyed sweet communion with God in that duty as well as others? Whether their hearts did never dance and leap up to God with heavenly affections, while they sang with their lips? And verily I should think it strange to hear a godly person deny this. Well, if ever thou didst, Christian, meet with God at this door of the Tabernacle (for I cannot yet think it otherwise), let me ask again, whether thy heart did not grow common, cold, and formal in the duty, before thou durst cast it off? (1 John ii, 23, 24). And if so (which I am very ready to believe), I desire such in the fear of God to consider these four questions:

First, Whether they may not fear that they are in an error; and that this darkness is befallen their judgments, as a punishment for their negligence and slightness of spirit in performing the duty when they did not question the lawfulness of it?

Secondly, Whether it were not better they laboured to recover the first liveliness of their affections in the duty (which would soon bring them again acquainted with that sweetness and joy they of old fouud in it), than to cast it off, upon so weak an evidence as they, who can say most, bring in against it?

Thirdly, Whether such as neglect one duty, are likely to thrive by any other, and keep up the savour of them fresh in their souls?

Fourthly, Whether, if God should suffer them to decline in their affections to any other ordinance (which may he forbid, if it be his will), it were not easy for satan to gather together arguments enough to make them scruple, and in time cast off, that as well as this? And there is reason for such a question, these times will

will tell us; wherein every ordinance hath had its turn to be questioned, yea, disowned, some by one, some by another; one will not sing; another will not have his child baptized; a third will not have any water baptism, nor supper neither; a fourth bungs up his ear too from all hearing of the word, and would have us expect an immediate teaching. Thus when once ordinances and truths become dead to us through our miscarriage under them, we can be willing (how beautiful soever they were once in our eye), yea, call to have them buried out of our sight. These things, sadly laid to heart, will give you reason to think, though this direction be placed last in order of my discourse, yet it should not find either the last or the least place (among all the other named) in your Christian care and practice.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein is contained the second Way of having our Loins girt with Truth. viz. *so as to make a free and bold Profession of it; and why this is our Duty; and a short Exhortation to it.*

THE second way that truth is assaulted is by force and violence; the devil pierceth the fox's skin of seducers with the lion's skin of persecutors. The bloodiest tragedies in the world have been acted on the stage of the Church; and the most inhuman massacres and butcheries committed on the harmless sheep of Christ. The first man that was slain in the world was a saint, and he for religion. And, as Luther said, Cain will kill Abel unto the end of the world. The fire of persecution can never go out quite, so long as there remains a spark of hatred in the wicked's bosom on earth, or a devil in hell to blow it up. Therefore there is a second way of having truth girt about the Christian's loins, as necessary as the other; and that is, in the profession of it. Many that could never be beaten from the truth by dint of argument, have been forced from it by the fire of persecution.—'Tis not an orthodox judgment will enable a man to suffer for the truth at the stake. Then that poor smith, in our English Martyrology, would not have sent such a dastard-like answer to his friend, ready to suffer for that truth which he himself had been a means to instruct him in, That indeed it was the truth, but he could not burn. Truth in the head, without holy courage, makes a man like the sword-fish; which, Plutarch saith, hath a sword in the head, but no heart to use it. Then a person becomes unconquerable, when from heaven he is endued with a holy boldness, to draw forth the sword of the spirit, and own the naked truth,

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by a free profession of it in the face of death and danger. This, this is to *have our loins girt about with truth.* So that the note from this second kind of girding with truth, is,

Doct. That it is the saints' duty, and should be their care, not only to get an established judgment in the truth, but also to maintain a stedfast profession of the truth. This the apostle presseth, Heb. x. 23. *Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.* He speaks it in opposition to those who, in those hazardous times, declined the assemblies of the saints, for fear of persecution; he calls it a *wavering;* and he that staggers is next door to apostacy. We must not spread our sails of profession in a calm, and furl them up when the wind riseth. Pergamus is commended, Rev. ii. 13. for her bold profession: *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where satan hath his throne; and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you.* It was a place where satan sat in the magistrate's seat, where it was matter enough to deserve death to be a Christian; yea, some blood now was shed before their eyes, and even in those days they denied not the truth. This God took kindly. 'Tis a strict charge Paul gives Timothy, 1 Epist. vi. 11. *But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness,* &c.; while others are prowling for the world, lay about thee for spiritual riches, pursue this with as hot a chace as they do their temporal. But what if this trade cannot be peaceably driven? must shop-windows then be shut up, profession laid aside, and he stay to be religious till more favourable times come about? No such matter: ver. 12. he bids him *fight the good fight of faith;* do not basely quit thy profession, but lay life and all to stake to keep this. And that he might engage him beyond a retreat, see ver. 13. *I charge thee, in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things; and Jesus Christ, who, before Pontius Pilate, witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment:* As if he had said, If ever you will see the face of Christ with comfort at the resurrection (who chose to lose his life, rather than deny or dissemble the truth), stand to it, and flinch not from your colours. Augustine, in his Confes. lib. 8. cap. 2. hath a notable story of one Victorinus, famous in Rome for rhetoric, which he taught the senators. This man in his old age was converted to Christianity, and came to Simplicianus (one eminent at that time for his piety), whispering in his ears softly these words, *I am a Christian.* But this holy man answered, *I will not believe it, nor count thee so, till I see thee among the Christians of the church:* at which he laughed, saying, *Do these walls make a Christian?* Cannot I be such, except I openly profess it, and let the world know the same? This he said for fear, being

being yet but a young convert, though an old man; but a while after (when he was more confirmed in the faith, and seriously considered, that if he should continue thus ashamed of Christ, he would be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his father with the holy angels) he changed his note, and came to Simplicianus, saying, *Let us go to the Church, I will now in earnest be a Christian;* and there, though a private profession of his faith might have been accepted, chose to do it openly, saying, That he had openly professed rhetoric, which was not a matter of salvation, and should be afraid to own the word of God in the congregation of the faithful? God requires both the religion of the heart and mouth, Rom. x. 10. *With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Confession of the mouth, without faith in the heart, is gross hypocrisy; to pretend faith without profession of the mouth, is both hypocrisy and cowardice.

Reas. I shall give but one reason of the point, and that is taken from the great trust which God puts in his saints concerning his truth? this is the great *depositum* which God delivers to his saints, with a strict and solemn charge to keep against all that undermine or oppose it. Some things we trust God with, some things God trusts us with. The great thing we put into God's hand to be kept for us, is our soul, 2 Tim. i. 12. *He is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.*— That which God trusts us chiefly with, is his truth. It is therefore said to be delivered to them, as a charge of money to a friend whom we confide in, Jude iii. *Contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. To them* (saith the apostle, speaking of the Jews) *were committed the oracles of God.* They were concredited with that heavenly treasure. So Paul exhorts Timothy, Eph. i. 1. *To hold fast the form of sound words;* and this, ver. 14. he calls *the good thing which was committed to him.* If he that is intrusted with the keeping of a king's crown and jewels, ought to look carefully to his charge, that none be lost or stolen; much more the Christian that hath in his charge God's crown and treasure. Rob God of his truth, and what hath he left? The word of truth is that testimony which the great God gives of himself to man. The saints are his chosen witnesses above others, whom he calls forth to vouch his truth, by a free and holy profession thereof before men (called therefore the witnesses of God, Psal. xix. 7. Isa. viii. 20. Heb. xii. 1. Rev. xi. 3.) He that maintains any error from the word, bear false witness against God. He that for fear or shame deserts the truth, or dissembles his profession, he denies God his testimony; and who can express what a bloody sin this is, and to what a high contempt of God it amounts! It were a horrid crime, though but in a man's case.—

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As when one is falsely accused in a court, to speak something that might clear the innocence of the man, and yet should suffer him to be condemned, rather than hazard himself a little by speaking the truth in open court. O, what then is his sin, that when God himself, in his truth, stands at sorry man's bar, dares not speak for God when called in to declare himself; but lets truth suffer by an unjust sentence, that himself may not at man's hands for bearing witness to it?

Object. But this may seem too heavy a burden to lay on the Christian's back, must we lay all at stake, and hazard all that is dear to us, rather than deny, or dissemble our profession of the truth? Sure Christ will have but few followers, if he holds his servants to such hard terms.

Answ. Indeed it is hard to flesh and blood; one of the highest stiles to be gone over in our way to heaven; a carnal heart cannot hear this, but he is offended presently, Matt. xiii. 21. Therefore such as are loth to lose heaven, and yet unwilling to venture thus much for it, have set their wits at work to find out an easier way thither. Hence those hereticks of old, Priscillianists, and others (whose chief religion was to save their own skin) made little of outward profession. They thought they might say, and unsay; swear, and forswear (according to their wretched principle, *Juro, perjuro, mentem injuratam gero*), so in their heart they did but cleave to the truth. O what fools were the prophets, apostles, and other holy martyrs, that have sealed the truth with their blood, if there might have been such a fair way of escaping the storm of persecution? Bold men, that to save a little trouble from man, for truth's sake, durst invent such detestable blasphemies against the truth; yea, deface those characters which nature itself engraves upon the conscience. The same window that let in the light of a Deity, would with it let in this also, that we should walk in the name of this God; the very heathen know this. *All people will walk, every one in the name of his God*, Micah iv. Socrates to blood held there was but one God; and in his apology for his life, said, *If they would give him his life, on condition to keep this truth to himself, and not to teach it to others, he would not accept it:* Behold here the powerful workings of a natural conscience! Have not they then improved the knowledge of the scripture well, in the mean time, that are so far outshot from nature's weak bow? Religion would soon vanish into an empty nothing, if for fear of every one we meet, we must (like run-away soldiers) pluck off our colours, and put our profession as it were in our pockets, lest we should be known to whom we belong. What doth God require by a free profession of his truth, more than a master doth of his servant, when he bids him take his livery, and follow him in the streets? Or when a

prince calls his subjects into the field, to declare their loyalty, by owning his quarrel against an invading enemy? And is it reasonable, what man requires of these, and only heard from God's hands? Nay, it is not more, not so much as we desire of God for ourselves. Who would not have God make profession of his love to us, and bear witness for us against satan, and our own sins, at that great day, when men and angels shall be spectators? And shall we expect that from God, which he owes us by no law, but of his own free promise, and deny him that which we are under so many bonds to pay? If it be but in some affliction (while we are here), how disconsolate are we, if God's face be a little overcast, and he doth not own us in our distress? And is there no kindness to be shewn to that God that knows your soul in adversity? When his truth is in an agony, may not Christ look, that all his friends should sit up and watch with it? O! it were shame, with a witness, that any such effeminate delicacy should be found among Christ's servants, that they cannot break a little of their worldly rest and enjoyments, to attend on him and his truth.

Use. Let this stir us up to get the girdle of truth close girt to us, that we may be able to hold fast the profession of it, even in the face of death and danger, and not to be offended when persecution ariseth. Blessed be God, 'tis not yet come to that, we have the truth at a cheaper rate; but how soon the market may rise, we know not. Truth is not always to be had at the same price. Buy it we must at any, but sell it upon no terms. And let me tell you, there hath, is, and will be a spirit of persecution in the hearts of the wicked, to the end of the world; and as satan was considering Job, before he laid his foul hands on him, so now persecution is working in the spirits of the ungodly; there are engines of death continually preparing in the thoughts and desires of satan and his instruments, against the sincere professors of the truth; 'tis already resolved upon what they would do, might power be given, and opportunity to put their malice in execution; yea, we are half way already towards a persecution. Satan comes first with a spirit of error, and then enrageth their hearts with wrath against the professors of truth. It is impossible, that error, being a brat of hell, should be peaceable; it would not then be like its father. That which is from beneath, can neither be pure nor peaceable. And how far God hath suffered this sulphurous spirit of error to prevail, is so notorious, that no apology is broad enough to cover the nakedness of these unhappy times. It is therefore high time to have our girdle of truth on, yea, close girt about us in the profession of it. Not every one that applauds truth will follow it, when once it comes to shew them the way to prison; nor every one that preacheth

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for it, or disputes for it, will suffer for it. Arguments are harmless things, blunt weapons; they fetch no blood; but when we suffer, then we are called to try it with truth's enemies at sharps. This requires something more than a nimble tongue, a sharp wit, and a logical head: Where then will be the wise, the disputer, the man of parts and gifts? Alas, they will (like cowardly soldiers) be wanting in the fight, though they could be as forward as the best at a muster, or training, when no enemy was in the field; when to appear for truth, was rather a matter of gain or applause, than loss and hazard. No, God hath chosen the foolish to confound the wise in this piece of service; the humble Christian, by his faith, patience, and love to the truth, to shame men of high parts, and no grace.

CHAP. V.

A Direction or two for the girding of Truth close to us in the Profession of it.

Quest. BUT how may a soul get to be thus girt with truth in the profession of it.

Ans. First, labour to get an heart inflamed with a sincere love to the truth: this only is able to match the enemies of truth.—The worst they can do is bonds or death, and *love is stronger than death;* it kills the very heart of death itself; it makes all things easy. Commandments are not grievous to love, nor doth it complain of sufferings. With what a light heart did Jacob, for the love of Rachel, endure the heat of the day, and cold of the night? *'Tis venturous:* Jonathan threw a kingdom at his heels, and conflicted with the anger of an enraged father, for David's sake; love never thinks itself a loser, so long as it keeps its beloved; yea, it is ambitious of any hazardous enterprize, whereby it may sacrifice itself in the service of its beloved, as we see in David, who put his life in his hands for Michael. How much more than all these, when our love is pitched upon so transcendent an object as Christ and his truth! Alas, they are but faint spirits which are breathed from a creature, weak beams that are shot from such sorry beauties! If these lay their lovers under such a law, that they cannot but obey, though with the greatest peril and hazard, what constraint then must a soul ravished with the love of Christ be under? This has made the saints leap out of their estates, relations, yea out of their bodies, with joy, counting it not their loss to part with them, but to keep them with the least prejudice to the truth. It is said, Rev. xii. 11. *They*

loved not their lives unto the death. Mark, not to the loss of some of the comforts of their lives, but *to death;* life itself they counted an enemy, when it would part them and truth; as a man doth not love his arm or leg, when it hazards the rest, but bids cut it off. Cannot we live (say these noble spirits) but to the clouding of truth, and calling our love to it and Christ into question? Welcome then the worst of deaths. This kept up David's courage when his life was laid wait for, Psal. cxix. 95. *The wicked have waited for me to destroy me, but I will consider thy testimonies.* A carnal heart would have considered his estate, wife and children, or at least his life now in danger; but David's heart was on a better subject: he considered the testimonies of God, and so much sweetness pours in upon his soul, while he is rowling them in his meditation, that he cannot hold. *O how I love thy law,* ver. 97. This made him set light by all the troubles he met with for his cleaving to the truth. It is a great mystery to the world, that men for an opinion (as they call it) should run such desperate hazard. Therefore Paul was thought by his judge to be out of his wits. And that question which Pilate asked Christ, seems to be rather slightingly than seriously spoken, John xvii. Our saviour had told him, ver. 27. that the end why he was born, and came into the world, was, that he should *bear witness to the truth.* Then Pilate, ver. 38. asks Christ, *What is truth?* and presently flings away, as if he had said, Is this now a time to think of truth, when thy life is in danger? What is truth, that thou shouldst venture so much for it? But a gracious soul may better ask, in a holy scorn, What are riches and honours? What the fading pleasures of this cheating world? Yea, what is life itself, that any, or all these, should be set in opposition to truth? O, sirs, look what has your love, that will command purse, credit, life, and all. Every man goes where his love carries him. If the world has your love, on it you will spend your lives; if truth has your hearts, you will catch the blow that is made at it in your own bressts, rather than let it fall on it.—Only be careful that your love to truth be sincere, or else it will leave you at the prison door, and make you part with truth, when you should most appear for it. There are three sorts of pretenders to truth, whose love is not like to endure the fiery trial.

First, Such as embrace truth for carnal advantage. Sometimes truth pays well for her board in the world's own coin, and so long every one will invite her to his house. These do not love truth, but the jewel at her ear. Many were observed, in Henry VIII.'s time, to be very zealous against abbeys, that loved their lands more than they hated their idolatry. Truth finds few that love her *gratis*, and those few will only suffer with truth, and for it; as for the other, when the worldly dowry that truth brought

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is once spent, you will find they are weary of their match. This kitchen fire burns no longer than such gross fuel of profit, credit, and the like, does feed it. If you cannot love naked truth, you will not bear to go naked for truth. If you cannot love disgraced truth, you will not endure to be disgraced for truth; and what usage truth finds, that her followers must expect.

Secondly, Those who commend truth, and cry it up highly; but if you mark them, they do but compliment with it; all this while they keep at a distance, and do not suffer truth to come within them, so as to give law unto them; like one that entertains a suitor, speaks well of him, holds discourse with him, but will not hear of marrying him. Bucholcerus would oft say, *Many kiss Christ, but few love him.* True love to Christ is conjugal; when a soul delivers up itself from an inward liking it hath to Christ, as to her husband, to be ruled by his spirit, and ordered by his word of truth, here is a soul loves Christ and his truth; but where truth has no command, and bears no rule, there dwells no love to truth in that heart. She that is not obedient, cannot be a loving wife, because love would constrain her to be so, and so would love in the soul enforce obedience to the truth it loves. Nay, he that doth not obey truth, is so far from loving it, that he is afraid of truth; and he that is slavishly afraid of truth, will sooner prove a persecutor of truth, than a sufferer for truth. So true is that of Hierome, Whom we fear, we hate; whom we hate, we wish they were destroyed. Saul feared David, and that made him industriously seek his ruin. Herod feared John, and that cost him his life; slavish fear makes the naughty heart imprison truth in his conscience, because if that had its liberty and authority in the soul, it would imprison, yea, execute every lust that now rules the roast; and he that imprisons truth in his own bosom, will hardly lie in prison himself as a witness for truth.

Thirdly, Such as have no zeal against truth's enemies. Love goes ever armed with zeal; this is the dagger she draws against all the opposers of truth. He that is not zealous, doth not love. Now right zeal acts (like fire) to its utmost power, yet ever keeping its place and sphere. If it be confined to the breast of a private Christian, whence it may not flame forth in punishing truth's enemies, then it burns inwardly the more, for being pent up, and preys (like a fire in his bones) upon the Christian's own spirits, consuming them, yea, eating him up for grief, to see truth trod under foot of error or prophaneness, and he not able to help it up. 'Tis no joy to a zealous lover to outlive his bride: such there have been, who could have chose rather to have leaped into their friend's grave, and laid down with them in the dust, than here pass a disconsolate life without them. *Let us go and*

die with him, said Thomas, when Christ told them that Lazarus was dead; and I am sure zealous lovers of truth count it as melancholy living in evil times, when that is fallen in the streets.—The news of the taking of the ark frighted good Eli's soul out of his body; and this may charitably be thought to have given life to Elijah's wish, yea, solemn prayer for death, 1 Kings xix. 4. *It is enough, take away my life.* The holy man saw how things went among the great ones of those wicked times: idolators then were courted, and the faithful servants of God carted (as I may so say), yea, killed; and now this zealous prophet thinks it a good time to leave the world in, rather than live in torment any longer, to see the name, truth, and servants of God trampled on, by those who should have shewn most kindness to them. But if zeal hath any power put into her hands, wherein she may vindicate truth's cause (as when she is exalted into the magistrate's seat), then the enemies of truth shall know and feel, that *she bears not the sword in vain.* The zealous magistrate will have, as an arm to relieve and defend truth, the Israelite; so a hand to smite blasphemy, error, and prophaneness, the Egyptian, when any one of them assault her. O how Moses laid about him (that meek man, who stood so mute in his own cause, Numb. xii.) when the people had committed idolatry! His heart was so inflred within him, that (well as he loved them) he could neither open his mouth in a prayer for them to God, nor his ear to receive any petition from them, till he had given vent to his zeal in an act of justice upon the offenders. Now, such, and such only, are the persons that are likely (when called) to suffer for the truth, who will not let it suffer, if they can help it. But as for natural Gallio-like spirits, that can see truth and error scuffling, and not do their utmost to relieve truth, by interposing their power and authority, if a magistrate; by preaching the one up, and the other down, if a minister; and by a free testimony to, fervent prayer for, and affectionate sympathizing with truth, (as it fares ill or well,) if a private Christian: I say, as for such, who stand in this case as some spectators about two wrestlers, not caring much who hath the fall; these are not the men that can be expected to expose themselves to much suffering for truth. That magistrate, who hath not zeal enough to stop the mouths of truth's enemies when he may, will he open his mouth in a free profession of it when death and danger face him? That minister, who hath neither love nor courage enough to apologize for truth in the *pulpit*, can it be thought he would stand to her defence at a *stake*? In a word, that *private Christian*, whose heart is not wounded through truth's sides, so as to sympathize with it, will he interpose himself betwixt truth and the blow that bloody persecutors aim at it, and choose to receive it into his own body, though

though to death, rather than it should light on truth? If the fire of love within be out, or so little that it will not melt the man into sorrow for the wrongs done to truth by men of corrupt minds, where will the flame be found, that should enable him to burn to ashes, under the hand of bloody men? He will never endure the fire in his body, that hath no more care to keep that sacred fire burning in his soul; if he cannot shed tears, much less will he bleed for *truth*.

Quest. If any now should ask, how they may get their hearts inflamed with this heavenly fire of love to truth? I answer, first,

Ans. 1. Labour for an inward conformity of thy heart to truth. Likeness is the ground of love. A carnal heart cannot like truth, because it is not like to truth. Such a one may love truth, as he did Alexander, *the king, not the person that was king.* Truth in its honour and dignity, when it can prefer him, but not naked truth itself. How is it possible, an earthly soul should love truth, that is heavenly? An unholy heart, truth that is pure? O 'tis sad indeed, when men's tenets and principles in their understandings do clash, and fight with the principles of their hearts and affections; when men have orthodox judgments, and heterodox hearts! There must needs be little love to truth, because the judgment and will are so unequally yoked; truth in the conscience reproving and threatening lust in the heart, and that again controulling truth in the conscience. Thus, like a scolding couple, they may a while dwell together, but taking no content in one another, the wretch is easily persuaded to give truth a bill of divorce at last, and send her away (as Ahasuerus did Vashti), that he may espouse other principles, which will suit better with his corrupt heart, and not cross him in the way he is in. This, this I am persuaded hath parted many and truth in these licentious days. They could not sin peaceably while they kept their judgments sound; truth ever and anon would be chiding them, and therefore to match their judgments with their hearts, they have taken up principles suitable to their lusts.—But, soul, if truth had such a power upon thee, to transform thee by the renewing of thy mind into its own likeness; that as the graft turns the stock into its own nature, so truth hath assimilated thee, and made thee bear fruit like itself; thou art the person that wilt never part with truth; before thou canst do this, thou must part with that new nature, which by it the Spirit of God hath begot in thee. There is now such a near union betwixt thee and truth, or rather thee and Christ, as can never be broken. We see what a mighty power there goes along with God's ordinance of marriage, that two persons, who possibly a month before never knew one another; yet their affections once knit by love, and their persons made one by marriage, they can now leave

friends and parents for to enjoy each other; such a mighty power, and much greater, goes along with this mystical marriage between the soul and Christ, the soul and truth; that the same person, who, before conversion, would not have ventured the loss of a penny for Christ, or his truth; yet, now knit to Christ and his truth, by a secret work of the spirit, anew forming him into the likeness thereof, he can bid adieu to the world, life, and all, for these. As that martyr told him, that asked whether he did not love his wife and children, and was not loth to part with them? *Yes*, saith he, *I love them so dearly, that I would not part with any of them for all that the Duke of Brunswick is worth* (whose subject he was); *but for Christ's sake and his truth, farewell to them all.*

Secondly, Labour to get thy heart more and more infired with the love of God, and this will work in thee a dear love to his truth: Love observes what is precious and dear to its beloved, and loves it for his sake. David's love to Jonathan made him inquire for some of his race that he might shew kindness to them for his sake. Love to God will make the soul inquisitive to find out what is near and dear to God, that by shewing kindness to it, he may express his love to him. Now, upon a little search, we shall find that the great God sets a very high price upon the head of truth, Psal. cxxxviii. 2. *Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.* That is God's name by which he is known, every creature hath God's name upon it; by it God is known, even to the least pile of grass; but to his word and truth therein written, he hath given pre-eminence above all other things that bear his name. Take a few considerations whereby we may a little conceive of the high value God sets on truth. First, God when he vouchsafeth his word and truth to a people, makes account he gives them one of the greatest mercies they can receive, or he give; he calls them *the great things of his law*, Hos. viii. 12. A people that enjoy his truth, they are by Christ's own judgment *lift up to heaven;* whatever a people have at God's hands without this, bears no more comparison with it, than Hagar's loaf of bread and bottle (which was Ishmael's portion) would with Isaac's inheritance. God that knows how to prize and rate his own gifts, saith of his word, which he *shewed to Jacob, and testimonies that he gives to Israel*, that *he hath not dealt so with any nation*, Psal. clxvii. 20. That is, not so richly and graciously. Secondly, consider God's especial care to preserve his truth; whatever is lost, God looks to his truth. In shipwrecks at sea, and fires at land, when men can save but little, they use not to choose lumber, and things of no worth, but what they esteem most precious. In all the great revolutions, changes, and overturning of kingdoms, and churches also, God hath still preserved

served his truth. Thousands of saints lives have been taken away, but that which the devil spights more than all the saints; yea, which alone he spights them for, (that is the truth), this lives, and shall, to triumph over his malice; and sure if truth were not very dear to God, he would not be at this cost to keep it with the blood of his saints; yea, which is more, the blood of his Son; whose errand into the world was by life and death *to bear witness to the truth*, John xviii. 37. In a word, in that great and dismal conflagration of heaven and earth, when the elements shall melt for heat, and the world come to its fatal period, then truth shall not suffer the least loss, but *the word of the Lord endureth for ever*, 1 Pet. i. 25. Thirdly, Consider the severity of God to the enemies of truth. A dreadful curse is denounced against those that shall *take away from it, or add the least to it*, that embase or clip this heavenly coin, Rev. xxii. 18. All these speak at what a high rate God values truth; and no wonder, if we consider what truth is (that truth which shines forth from the written word): It is the extract of God's thoughts and counsels which from everlasting he took up, and had in his heart to effect. Nothing comes to pass but as an accomplishment of this his word; it is the most full and perfect representation that God himself could give of his own being and nature to the sons of men; that by it we may know him, and love him. Great princes use to send their pictures by their ambassadors, to those whom they woo for marriage. God is such an infinite perfection, that no hand can draw him to the life but his own, and this he hath done exactly in his word, from which all his saints have come to be enamoured with him. As we deal with truth, so we do with God himself; he that despiseth that, despiseth him. He that abandons the truth of God, renounceth the God of truth. Tho' men cannot come to pull God out of his throne, and deprive him of his Godhead, yet they come as near this as it is possible, when they let out their wrath against the truth; in this they do, as it were, execute God in effigy. There is reason, we see, why God should so highly prize his truth, and that we that love him should cleave to it.

Thirdly, Be much in the meditation of the transcendent excellency of truth: *The eye affects the heart;* this is the window at which love enters. Never any that had a spiritual eye to see truth in her native beauty, but had a heart to love her. This was the way that David's heart was ravished with the love of the word of truth, Psal. cxix. 96. *O how I love thy law, it is my meditation all the day;* while his thoughts were on it, his love was drawn to it. David found a great difference betwixt meditating on the truths of God's word, and other excellencies which the world cries up so highly: When he goes to entertain himself with

with the thoughts of some perfection in the creature, he finds it but a jejune, dry subject, compared with this; he soon tumbles over the book of the world's excellencies, and can find no notion that deserves any long stay upon it; *I have seen*, saith he, *an end of all perfection*; he is at the world's end presently, and in a few thoughts can see to the bottom of all the world's glory: But when he takes up the truths of God into his thoughts, now he finds work enough for his admiration, and sweet meditation; *thy commandments are exceeding broad;* great ships cannot sail in narrow rivers, and shallow waters; neither can minds, truly great with the knowledge of God and heaven, find room enough in the creature to turn, and expatiate themselves in. A gracious soul is soon a-ground, and at a stand, when upon these flats; but let it launch out into the meditation of God, his word, the mysterious truths of the gospel, and he finds a place of broad waters, sea-room enough to lose himself in. I might here shew you the excellency of divine truths from many heads, as from the source and spring-head whence they flow, the God of truth; from their opposite, that mis-shapen monster, *error*, &c.; but I shall only direct your meditation to a few *enamouring properties* which you will find in these truths. You may meet a heap of them together in Psal. xix. 7. and so on. *Truth*, it is *pure*; this made David love it, Psal. cxix. 140. It is not only pure, but makes the soul pure and holy that embraceth it. *Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*, John xvii. 17. It is the pure water that God washeth foul souls with, Ezek. xxxvi. 25. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you;* foul puddle water will as soon make the face, as error make the soul clean. *Truth is sure*, and hath a firm bottom, Psal. xix. 7. We may lay the whole weight of our souls upon it, and yet not crack under us; cleave to truth, and it will stick to thee. It will go with thee to prison, banishment, yea, stake itself, and bear thy charges wherever thou goest upon her errand. *Not one thing*, saith Joshua, *hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, not one thing hath failed thereof*, Joshua xxiv. 14. Whatever you find there promised, count it money in your purse. *Fourscore years*, saith Polycarp, *I have served God, and found him a good Master.* But when men think, by forsaking the truth, to provide well for themselves, they are sure to meet with disappointments. Many have been flattered from truth with goodly promises, and then served no better than Judas was by the Jews, after he had betrayed his Master into their bloody hands, *See thou to that.* Though persecutors love the treason, yet they hate the traitor; yea, oft (to shew their devilish malice) they, when some have been got to

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wound their conscience by denying the truth, have most cruelly butchered them, and gloried in it, as a full revenge to destroy soul and body together. *Again, truth is free,* and makes the soul *free* that cleaves to it, John viii. 32. *The truth shall make you free.* Christ tells the Jews of a bondage they were in (which that vain people never dreamed on), ver. 44. *Ye are of your father, the devil, and his lusts ye will do:* Such slaves are all sinners, they must do what the devil will have them, and dare no more displease him, than a child his father with a rod in his hand. Some witches have confessed, that they have been forced to send out their imps to do mischief to others, that they might have ease themselves; for till they did send them abroad upon such an errand, they were themselves tormented by them. And he who hath a lust sucking on him, finds as little rest, if he be not always serving it, and making provision for it: Can the world, think you, shew such another slave as this poor wretch is? Well, though all the bolts that the devil hath (lusts I mean) were locked upon one sinner, and he shut up in the closest dungeon of all his prison, yet let but this poor slave begin to be acquainted with the truth of Christ, so as to open his heart to it, and close with it, you will soon hear that the foundations of the prison are shaken, its doors thrown open, and the chains fallen off the poor creature's legs. Truth cannot itself be bound, nor will it dwell in a soul that lies bound in sin's prison; and therefore when one truth and the soul are agreed, or rather Christ and the soul, who are brought together by truth, then the poor creature may lift up his head with joy, for his redemption and jail-delivery from his spiritual bondage draws nigh; yea, the day is come, the key is in the lock already to let him out. It is impossible we should be acquainted with truth (as it is in Jesus), and be mere strangers to this liberty that attends it, Ephes. iv. 19, 20, 21. In a word, Lastly, *Truth is victorious.* It is great, and shall prevail at last. It is the great counsel of God; and though many fine plots and devices are found in the hearts of men (which shew what they would do), yet the counsel of the Lord shall stand; all their eggs are barren when they have sat longest on them; alas, they want power to hatch what their malice sits brooding on.—Sometimes, I confess, the enemies to truth get the militia of this lower world into their hands, and then truth seems to go to the ground, and those that witness to it are even slain; yet then it is more than their persecutors can do, to get them laid under ground in their grave, Rev. xi. 9. Some, that were never thought on, shall strike in on truth's side, and forbid the burial. Persecutors need not be at cost for marble to write the memorial of their victories on, dust will serve well enough, for they are not like to last so long. *Three days and a half* the witnesses may lie

lie dead in the streets, and truth sit disconsolate by them; but within a while they are walking, and truth triumphing again. If persecutors could kill their successors, then their work might be thought to stand strong, needing not to fear another to pull down what they have set up; and yet then their work would lie as open to heaven, and might be as easily hindered, as their's at Babel. Who loves not to be on the winning side? choose truth for thy side, and thou hast it. News may come that truth is sick, but never that it is dead. No, it is error that is short-lived; *a lying tongue is but for a moment;* but truth's age runs parallel with God's eternity. It shall live to see their heads laid in the dust, and to walk over their graves, that were so busy to make one for her. Live, did I say? yea, reign in peace with those who now are willing to suffer with, and for it. And wouldst thou not (Christian) be one among that goodly train of victors who shall attend on Christ's triumphant chariot into the heavenly city, there to take the crown, and sit down in thy throne with those that have kept the field, when Christ and his truth were militant here on earth? Thus, wouldst thou but in thy thoughts wipe away tears and blood, which now cover the face of suffering truth, and present it to thy eye, as it shall look in glory, thou couldst not but cleave to it with a love stronger than death.

But, Secondly, If yet there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath, which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which, being a greater fire, draws out the other. Thus when thy thoughts are scorched, and thy heart seared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them a while to hell fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful, Rev. xxi. 8. and all that run away from truth's colours, Heb. x. 39. and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. Pardon me (saith the holy man), O Emperor, if I obey not thy command; thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell. Observable is that of David, Psal. cxix. 161. *Princes have persecuted me without a cause, but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.* He had no cause to fear them, that had no cause to persecute him; one threatening out of the word (that set the point of God's wrath to his heart) scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, alas, when hottest, is but a temperate climate, to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire,

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in spite of their enemies' teeth. But the creature under God's wrath, is like one shut up in a close oven; no crevice open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Second Kind of Truth, Truth of Heart, or Sincerity, with the Kinds of it; and in particular, of Moral Uprightness, together with its Deficiency; and a Double Caution about this; the one to the Saints, the other to the Morally Upright Person.

WE come now to the second kind of *truth*, commended to the Christian under the notion of the soldier's girdle, and that is *truth of heart*. Where it would be known. First, What I mean by truth of heart. Secondly, Why compared to a girdle. For the

First, By *truth* of heart, I understand *sincerity;* so taken in Scripture, Heb. x. 22. *Let us draw near with a true heart*, that is, with a sincere heart. We have them oft conjoined, the one explaining the other, Josh. xxiv. 14. *Fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth.* 1 Cor. v. 8. we read of *the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* Hypocrisy is a lie with a fair cover over it; an insincere heart is a false heart; the inward frame and motion of the heart comports not with the profession and behaviour of the outward man; like a clock, whose wheels within go not as the hand points without.

Secondly, Sincerity, or truth of heart, may fitly be compared to a girdle, in regard of the two-fold use and end, for which a girdle (especially the soldier's belt) is worn.

First, The girdle is used as an ornament put on uppermost, to cover the joints of the armour, which would, if seen, cause some uncomeliness. Here (at the loins I mean) those pieces of armour for the defence of the lower parts of the body, are fastened to the upper; now because they cannot be so closely knit and clasped, but there will be some little gaping betwixt piece and piece, therefore they used to put over these parts a broad girdle, that covered all that uncomeliness. Now sincerity doth the same for the Christian, which the girdle doth for the soldier. The saint's graces are not so close, nor his life so exact, but in the best there are found infirmities and defects, which are so many gapings and clefts in his armour; but sincerity covers all, that he is neither put to shame for them, nor exposed to danger by them.

Secondly,

Secondly, The girdle was used for strength; by this the loins were staid and united, and the soldier made stronger to fight or march; as a garment, the closer it fits, the warmer it is; so the belt, the closer it is girt, the more strength the loins feel; hence God, threatening to enfeeble and weaken a person or people, saith, *Their loins shall be loosened*, Isa. xlv. 1. *I will loose the loins of kings*, and Job xii. 21. *He weakened the strength of the mighty*. He looseth the girdle of the mighty.

Now sincerity may well be compared in this respect to the soldier's girdle. It is a grace that doth gird the soul with strength, and makes it mighty to do or suffer. Indeed it is the very strength of every grace; so much hypocrisy as is found cleaving to our graces, so much weakness. 'Tis sincere faith that is strong faith. Sincere love, that is the mighty love. Hypocrisy is to grace, as the worm is to the oak, the rust to the iron; it weakens them, because it corrupts them. The metaphor, thus opened, affords these two doctrinal conclusions; in handling of which, I shall comprise what I have to say further of this piece of armour.

Doct. 1. That sincerity, or truth of heart in our ways, covers all the Christian's uncomeliness.

Doct. 2. That truth of heart, or sincerity, is of excellent use to strengthen the Christian in his whole course.

Doct. 1. To begin with the first, sincerity covers all our uncomelinesses. In handling this point, this is our method.

First, To inquire which is the truth and sincerity that doth this.

Secondly, We shall inquire what uncomelinesses there are that sincerity covers.

Thirdly, How sincerity covers them.

Fourthly, Why sincerity doth this, or some account given for all this.

First, of the first. Let us inquire which is that truth and sincerity that covers all uncomelinesses and deficiencies in the Christian. Here we must distinguish of a two-fold sincerity; one moral, another evangelical. 1. There is a moral truth and uprightness, which we may call a field-flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature. It cannot be denied, but one that hath not a dram of sanctifying saving grace, may shew some kind of uprightness and truth in his actions.—God himself comes in as a witness for Abimelech, that what he did in taking Sarah, was in the uprightness of his heart, Gen. xx. 6. *I know* (saith God) *that thou didst this in the integrity of thy heart;* that is, thou didst mean honestly, as to this particular business, and didst not intend any wrong to Abraham, whose wife she was, unknown to thee. Joab, though a bloody man, yet dealt

dealt very uprightly and squarely with David, concerning the rendition of Rabbah, when he had a fair advantage of stealing away the honour from his prince to himself. Many such instances may be given of men that have been great strangers to a work of grace on their hearts; but this is not the uprightness that we mean in the point laid down. It doth indeed render a person very lovely, and amiable before men, to be thus upright and honest in his dealings; but methinks I hear the Lord saying concerning such, as once he did to Samuel of Eliab, 1 Sam. xvi. 7. *Look not on their countenance*, so as to think these are they which he accepts; no, he hath refused them, *for the Lord seeth not as man seeth.* God's eye looks deeper than man's. There are two great defects in this uprightness, which God rejects it for. First, It grows not from a good root, a renewed heart.—This is a hair on the moral man's pen, which blurs and blots his copy, when he writes fairest. It is like the leprosy of Naaman; that same, *but he was a leper*, took away the honour of his greatness at court, and prowess in the field; so here it stains the fairest actions of a mere moral man. *But he is a christless graceless person.* The uprightness of such does others more good in this world, than themselves in another. They are by this moral honesty profitable to those that have civil commerce with them; but it doth not render themselves acceptable to God. Indeed, had not God left some authority of conscience to awe and keep them that have no grace within some bounds of honesty, this world would have been no more habitable for the saints, than the forest of wild beasts is now for man. And such is the uprightness of men, void of sanctifying grace, that they are rather rid by an overpowering light of conscience that scares them, than sweetly led by any inward principle inclining them to take complacency in that which is good. Abimelech himself, for whom (as we read) God so apologized, yet is let to know, that his honesty in that matter came rather from God's restraint upon him, than any real goodness in him: Gen. xx. *I also withheld thee from sinning against me, therefore suffered I thee not to touch her.*

Secondly, This moral uprightness falls short of the chief end indispensably necessary to make a person upright indeed. This is the glory of God, 1 Cor. x. 31. *Whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* The archer may lose his game by shooting short, as well as shooting wide. The gross hypocrite shoots wide, the uprightest moralist shoots short. He may, and oft doth, take his aim right, as to the particular and immediate end of his action, but ever fails in regard of the ultimate end. Thus, a servant may be faithful to his master, scorn to wrong him of a farthing, yea, cordially seek his master's profit, and yet God never looked at,

or

or thought of in all this, and so all worth nothing, because God is left out of the story, who is principally to be regarded: Eph. vi. 7. Servants are commanded to *do their service as to God, not to man;* that is, not *only* nor *chiefly* to man. 'Tis true, the master is not to be looked at in the servant's duty, but in his way, only as it leads to the glory of God; he must not, when he hath desired to please his earthly master, sit down as at his journey's end, but pass on, as the eye doth through the air and clouds to the sun, where it is terminated; so he to God, as the chief end, why he is dutiful and faithful to man. Now no principle can lead the soul so high as to aim at God, but that which comes from God. See both these excellently couched together, Phil. i. 10, 11. *That ye may be sincere, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.* Where you may observe, First, That the sincerity of the right stamp is that which brings forth fruits of righteousness to the praise of God, that is, where the glory of God is the end of all our actions. Secondly, That such fruit cannot be born, *but by Christ;* the soul must be planted into Christ, before it can be thus sincere, to bear fruits of righteousness to the praise of God. Hence these fruits of righteousness are said to be by Jesus Christ. What men do by themselves, they do for themselves: they eat their own fruit, devour the praise of what they do; the Christian only that doth all by Christ, doth all for Christ; he hath his sap from Christ (into whom he is grafted) that makes him fruitful, and therefore he reserves all the fruit he bears for him. Thus we see how this moral uprightness is itself fundamentally defective, and therefore cannot be that girdle which hides and covers our other defects: yet before I pass on to the other, I would leave a two-fold caution for improvement of what hath been said concerning this uprightness; the one is to the sincere Christian, the other is to such as have no more than a moral uprightness.

Caution 1. To the sincere Christian. May there be found a kind of uprightness among men that are carnal and destitute of God's sanctifying grace? O then, look you to it, in whose hearts dwells the spirit of grace, that you be not put to shame by those that are graceless, which you must needs be, when you are taken tardy in those things, that they cannot be charged for. Many among them there are that scorn to lie; shall a saint be taken in an untruth? Their moral principles bind them over to the peace, and will not suffer them to wrong their neighbour; and can cheating, over-reaching oppression, follow a saint's hand? Except your righteousness exceeds their best, you are not Christians; and can you let them exceed you in those things, which, when they are done, leave them short of Christ and heaven?

'Tis

'Tis time for the scholar to throw off his gown, and disclaim the name of an Academick, when every school-boy is able to dunce and puzzle him; and for him also to lay aside his profession, and let the world know what he is, yea, what he never was, that can let a mere civil man, with his weak bow, only backed with moral principles, out-shoot him that pretends to Christ and his grace. I confess it sometimes so falls out, that a saint under a temptation may be out-stripped by one that is carnal in a particular case: as a lackey that is an excellent footman, may (from some prick, or present lameness in his foot) be left behind, by one that at another time should not be able to come near him. We have too many sorrowful examples of moral men's out-stripping even a saint, at a time, when under a temptation; a notable passage we meet with concerning Abimelech's speech to Sarah (after her dissembling and equivocating speech, that Abraham was her brother), Gen. xx. 16. *And unto Sarah he said* (that is, Abimelech said to her), *Behold I have given thy brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, he is to thee a covering of the eyes unto all that are with thee, and with all other.* Now, mark the words which follow, *Thus she was reproved.* How? where lies the reproof? Here are none but good words, and money to boot also. He promised protection to her and Abraham; none should wrong him in wronging her; and tells her what he had freely given Abraham. Well, for all this we shall find a sharp reproof, though lapped up in these sweet words, and silvered over with his thousand pieces. First, She was reproved by the uprightness of Abimelech in that business, wherein she had sinfully dissembled. That he who was a stranger to the true God and his worship, should be so square and honest, as to deliver her up untouched, when once he knew her to be another man's wife; and not only so, but instead of falling into a passion of anger, and taking up thoughts of revenge against them, for putting this cheat upon him (which having them under his power, had not been strange for a prince to have done); for him to forget all this, and rather shew such kindness and high bounty to them, this must needs send a sharp reproof home to Sarah's heart, especially considering that he, a heathen, did all this; and she (one called to the knowledge of God, in covenant with God, and the wife of a prophet) was so poor-spirited, as for fear of a danger which only her husband (and that without any great ground) surmised, to commit two sins at one clap, dissemble, and also hazard the loss of her chastity (the least of which was worse than the thing they were so afraid of); these things, I say, laid together, amounted to such a reproof, as no doubt made her and Abraham too heartily ashamed before God and man.—Again, Abimelech, in calling Abraham her brother (not her husband),

band), did give her a smart rebuke, putting her in mind, how with that word he had been deceived by them. Thus godly Sarah was reproved by a prophane king. O Christians, take heed of putting words into the mouths of wicked men to reprove you withal; they cannot reprove you, but they reproach God: Christ is put to shame with you and by you; for the good name-sake of Christ, which cannot but be dearer to you (if saints) than your lives, look to your walking, and especially your civil converse with the men of the world; they know not what you do in your closet, care not what you are in the congregation, they judge you by what you are when they have to do with you. As they find you in your shop, bargains, promises, and such like, so they think of you and your profession. Labour therefore for this uprightness to man; by this you may win some, and judge others. Better vex the wicked world with strict walking, as Lot did the Sodomites, than set them on work to mock and reproach thee and thy profession by any scandal, as David by his sad fall.—They that will not follow the light of thy holiness, will soon spy the thief in the candle, and point at it.

Caution 2. The second word of caution, is to those that are morally upright, and no more. Take heed this uprightness proves not a snare to thee, and keeps thee from getting evangelical uprightness. I am sure it was so to the young man in the gospel. In all likelihood he might have been better, had he not been so good. His honesty and moral uprightness was his undoing, or rather his conceit of them, to castle himself in them.—Better he had been a publican, driven to Christ in the sense of his sin, than a pharisee, kept from him with an opinion of his integrity. These, these are the weeds, with which many (thinking to save themselves by) keep themselves under water to their perdition. *There is more hope of a fool*, Solomon tells us, *than of one wise in his own conceit*; and of the greatest sinner, than of one conceited of his own righteousness. If once the disease take the brain, the cure must needs be the more difficult: no offering Christ to one in a frenzy. Art thou one kept from unrighteous ways wherein others walk? May be, thou art honest and upright in thy course, and scornest to be found false in any of thy dealings. Bless God for it, but take heed of blessing thyself in it; there is the danger; this is one way of being righteous over-much; a dangerous pit, of which Solomon warns all that travel in heaven-road, Eccles. vii. 16. There is undoing in this over-doing, as well as in any under-doing; for so it follows in the same verse, *Why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Thou art not, proud man, so fair for heaven as thou flatterest thyself. A man upon the top of one hill, may seem very nigh to the top of another, and yet can never come there, except he comes down from that where he is. The mount of thy civil righteousness, and mo-

ral uprightness, on which thou standest so confidently, seems perhaps level in thy proud eye to God's holy hill in heaven, yea, so nigh, that thou thinkest to step over from one to the other with ease. But let me tell thee, it is too great a stride for thee to take; thy safer way, and nearer, were to come down from thy mountain of self-confidence, where satan hath set thee, on a design to break thy neck, and to go the ordinary road, in which all that ever got heaven went; and that is by labouring to get an interest in Christ and his righteousness, which is provided on purpose for the creature to wrap up his naked soul in, and to place his faith on; and thus thy uprightness (which before was but of the same form with the heathen's moral honesty) may commence, or rather be baptized, Christian, and become evangelical grace: but let me tell thee, before I dismiss thee, that thou canst not lay hold of Christ's righteousness, till thou hast let fall the lie (thy own righteousness) which hitherto thou hast held so fast in thy right hand. When Christ called the *blind man* to him, Mark x. 50. it is said, *he, casting away his garment, rose and came to Jesus;* do thou so, and then come and welcome.

CHAP. VII.

Of Evangelical or Godly Sincerity, what it is; and what Uncomelinesses this Girdle covers; as also how it covers them.

WE proceed to the second kind of *truth*, or uprightness, which I called an evangelical uprightness. This is a plant found growing only in Christ's garden, or the enclosure of a gracious soul. It is by way of distinction from that I called moral, known by the name of a *godly sincerity*, or the sincerity of God, 2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing is in this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom; but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.* Now in two respects this evangelical sincerity may be called godly sincerity. First, because it is of God. Secondly, because it aims at God, and ends in God.

SECT. I.—First, *It is of God.* It is his creature, begot in the heart by his spirit alone. Paul, in the place afore-mentioned, 2 Cor. i. 12. doth excellently derive its pedigree for us. What he calls walking in *godly sincerity*, in the first part of the verse, he calls *having our conversation by the grace of God*, in the latter part; yea, opposeth it to *walking with fleshly wisdom in the world* (the great wheel in the moral man's clock); and what doth all this amount to, but to shew that this sincerity is a babe of

grace, and calls none on earth father? But this is not all; this godly *sincerity* is not only of divine extraction (for so are common gifts that are supernatural, the hypocrite's boon as well as the saint's); but it is part of the new creature, which his sanctifying spirit forms and works in the elect, and none besides. It is a covenant-grace, Ezek. xi. 19. *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you.* That *one heart* is this godly sincere heart opposed to the *double heart*, or a heart and a heart, by which the hypocrite is often described in the word.

Secondly, *It aims at God, and ends in God.* The highest project and most ultimate end that a soul, thus sincere, is big with, is, how it may please God. The disappointment such a godly sincere person meets with from any other, troubles him no more, than it would to a merchant, who speeds in the main end of his voyage to the Indies, and returns richly laden with the prize of gold and silver he went for, but only loseth his garter or shoe-string in the voyage. As the master's eye directs the servant's hand, if he can do his business to his master's mind, he hath his wish, though strangers, who come into the shop, like it not. Thus godly sincerity acquiesceth in the Lord's judgment of him. Such a one shoots not at small nor great, studies not to accommodate himself to any, to hit the humour of rich or poor, but singles out God in his thoughts from all other, as the chief object of his love, faith, fear, joy, &c.: he directs all his endeavours, like a wise archer, at this point, and when he can most approve himself to God, he counts he shoots best. Hear holy Paul speaking, not only his own private thoughts, but the common sense of all sincere believers, 2 Cor. v. 9. *We labour, whether present or absent, that we may be accepted of him.* The world's true man, is he that will not wrong man; though many go thus far, who can make thus bold with God for all their demure carriage to man. Some that would not steal the worth of a penny from their neighbour, yet play the notorious thieves with God in greater matters, than all the money their neighbour hath is worth. They can steal that time from God, to gratify their own occasions, which he hath inclosed for himself, and lays peculiar claim to (the Sabbath-day I mean), by such a title as will upon trial be found stronger, I trow, than we can shew for the rest of the week to be ours. Others will not lie to man possibly in their dealing with him; and it were better living in the world, if there were more of this truth among us; but these very men, many of them, yea, all that are not more than morally upright, make nothing of lying to God, which they do in every prayer they make, promising to do what they never bestow a serious thought how they may perform: they say they will sanctify God's

God's name, and yet throw dirt in the face of every attribute in it; they pray that the will of God may be done, and yet, while they know their sanctification is his will, they content themselves with their unholy hearts and natures, and think it enough to beautify the front of their lives, that part which faceth man, and stands to the street, as I may so say, with a few flourishes of civility and justness in their worldly dealings, though their inward man lies all in woeful ruins at the same time. But he is God's true man, that desires to give unto God the things that are God's, as well as unto man the things that are man's; yea, who is first true to God, and then to man for his sake. Good Joseph, when his brethren feared, as strangers to him, (for yet they knew no other), they should receive some hard measure at his hands; mark, what course he takes to free their troubled thoughts from all suspicion of any unrighteous dealing from him. *Do this*, saith he, *and live, for I fear God*, Gen. xlii. 18. As if he had said, Expect nothing from me, but what is square and upright, for I fear God; you possibly think, because I am a great man, and you poor strangers, where you have no friend to intercede for you, that my might should bear down your right, but you may save yourselves the trouble of such jealous thoughts concerning me; for I see one infinitely more above me, than I seem to be above you, and him I fear, which I could not do if I should be false to you. The word, 2 Cor. i. 12. for sincerity, is emphatical, *eilikrineia*, a metaphor from things tried by the light of the sun, as when you are buying cloth, or such like ware, you will carry it out of the dark shop, and hold it up to the light, by which the least hole in it is discovered; or as the eagle (say some) holds up her young against the sun, and judgeth them her own, if able to look up wishfully against it, or spurious if not able. Truly, that is the godly sincere soul, which looks up to heaven, and desires to be determined in his thoughts, judgment, affections, and practices, as they can stand before the light, which shines from thence through the word, the luminary into which God hath gathered all light for guiding souls, as the sun in the firmament is for directing our bodies in their walking to and fro in the world. If these suit with the word, and can look on it, without being put to shame by it, then on the sincere soul goes in his enterprize with courage, nothing shall stop him: but if any of these be found to shun the light of the word (as Adam would, if he could, the seeing of God), not being able to stand to its trial, then he is at his journey's end, and can be drawn forth by no arguments from the flesh; for it goes not on the flesh's errand, but on God's; and he that sends him, shall only stay him. Things are true or right, as they agree with their first principles. When the counterpart agrees with the original writing, then it is true; when a measure agrees with the legal stan-

dard or town bushel, then it is true: Now the will of God is standard to all our wills, and he is the sincere man that labours to take the rule and measure of all his affections and actions from that. Hence David is called a man after God's own heart, which is but a *periphrasis* of his sincerity, and is as much as if the Spirit of God had said, he was an upright man, he carries on his heart the sculpture and image of God's heart, as it is engraved on the seal of the word. But enough for the present; this may serve to shew what is evangelical uprightness. Three things would be desired further, before we fall on the application.

First, To shew what uncomelinesses they are that sincerity covers.

Secondly, How sincerity covers these.

Thirdly, Why this evangelical sincerity doth cover these. We shall give some account to all.

SECT. II.—*Quest.* 1. Of the first, What uncomeliness doth sincerity cover?

Ans. I answer, all, especially sinful. There are several external temporal privileges, in which, if any fall short (such excellency does this vain world put on them, more than their intrinsical worth calls for), they are exposed to some dishonour, if not contempt, in the thoughts of others. Now where sincere grace is, it affords a fair cover to them all; yea, puts more abundant honour on the person in the sight of God, angels, and men also, if wise, than the other can occasion contempt.

1. Beauty: this is the great idol, which the whole world *wanders after*, as they after the *beast*, Rev. xiii. which if God denies, and confines the souls of some to a more uncomely house (body I mean) than others, this their mean bodily presence prejudiceth them in the esteem of others. Now grace, if it be but graced with sincerity, shines through the cloud that nature hath darkened the countenance withal, Eccl. viii. 1. *Wisdom makes the face shine.* Who, that hath the use of his reason, would not prize and choose the vessel in the cellar full of generous wine, before a gilt tun that hangs up empty at the door for a sign? If sincere grace fills not the heart within, the beauty with which nature hath gilt the face without, makes the person but little worth. A beautiful person, without true grace, is but a fair stinking weed; you know the best of such a one, if you look on him furthest off; whereas a sincere heart, without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower (not painted with such fine colours on the leaves), better in the hand than eye, to smell on, than look on: the nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him. Outward uncomeliness to true grace, is but as some old mean buildings you sometimes see stand before a goodly stately house, which hide its glory only from the traveller

veller that passeth by at some distance; but he that comes in, sees its beauty, and admires it.

2. Again, A mean parentage, and inglorious descent, is much despised in the world. Well, how base soever the stock, and ignoble the birth be, when grace unfeigned comes, it brings arms with it, it clarifies the blood, and makes the house illustrious.—*Since thou wast precious in my eye, thou hast been honourable*, Isa. iv. 4. Sincerity sets a mark of honour; if you see this star shining, though over a mean cottage, it tells thee a great prince dwells there, an heir of heaven. Sincerity brings the creature into alliance with a high family, no less than of the high God, by which new alliance, his own inglorious name is blotted out, and a new name given him: he bears the name of God, to whom he is joined by a faith unfeigned; who dares say that the God of heaven's child, or Christ's bride, are of an ignoble birth?

3. Again, A low purse, as well as low parentage, exposeth to contempt, yea, more: Some, by their purse, redeem themselves in time (as they think) from the scorn of their mean stock. The little spring from whence the water came, by the time it hath run some miles, and swelled into a broad river, is out of sight, and not inquired much after: but poverty, that itself sounds reproach in the ears of this proud world. Well, though a man were poor, even to a proverb, yet if a vein of true godliness, sincere grace, be but to be found running in his heart, here is a rich mine, that will lift him up above all the world's contempt; such a one may possibly say, he hath no money in his house; but he cannot say, that he hath no treasure, that he is not rich, and speak true; he surely is rich that hath a key to God's treasury. The sincere soul is rich in God; what God hath is his; *all is yours, you are Christ's.*

4. Again, In a word, to name no more parts and endowments of the mind, these are applauded above all the former by some; and indeed they carry in them an excellency, that stands more level to his noblest faculty, reason, than the other, which are so far beneath its spiritual nature, that as Gideon's soldiers (some of them) could not drink the water till they bowed down on their knees, so neither could man take any relish in these, did he not first debase himself far beneath the lofty stature of his reasonable soul; but knowledge, parts, and abilities of the mind, these seem to lift up man's head, and make him that he loseth none of his height; and therefore none so contemptible by the wise world, as those that are of weak parts, and mean intellectual abilities.—Well, now let us see what cover sincerity hath for this nakedness of the mind, which seems the most shameful of all the rest. Where art thou, Christian, that I may tell thee (who sits lamenting and bemoaning thy weak parts, and shallow understanding)

what a happy man thou art, with thy honest sincere heart, beyond all compare with these, whose sparkling parts do so dazzle thy eyes, that thou canst not see thy own privilege above them? Their pearl is but in the head, and they may be toads for all that; but thine is in the heart, and it is the pearl of grace that is the pearl of greatest price. Thy sincere heart sets thee higher in God's heart, than thy weak parts do lay thee low in their deceived opinion; and thou, without the abilities of mind that they have, shalt find the way to heaven; but they, for all their strong parts, shall be tumbled down to hell, because they have not thy sincerity. Thy mean gifts do not render thee incapable of heaven's glory; but their unsanctified gifts and endowments are sure to make them capable of more of hell's shame and misery.—In a word, though here thy head be weak, and parts low, yet for thy comfort know, thou shalt have a better head given thee to thy sincere heart, when thou comest to heaven; but their knowing heads shall not meet with better hearts in hell, but be yoked eternally to their own wicked ones in torment; but enough of this. I come to the second kind of uncomeliness which sincerity covers, and that is sinful.

Secondly, Now this sinful uncomeliness must needs be the worst, because it lights on the most beautiful part, the soul; if dirt thrown on the face be more uncomely than on another member, because 'tis the fairest, then no uncomeliness like that, which defiles and blacks the soul and spirit; because this is intended by God, to be the prime seat of man's beauty. Now that which most stains and deforms the soul, must be that which most opposeth its chief perfection, which in its primitive creation was, and can still be no other than the beauty of holiness, drawn on it by the holy spirit's curious pencil: and what can that be but the foul monster which is called sin? This hath marred man's sweet countenance, that he is no more like the beauty of God created, than dead Sarah's face was like that beauty, which was a bait for the greatest princes, and made her husband go in fear of his life, wherever he came; nay, than the foul fiend, now a cursed devil in hell, is like to the holy angel he was in heaven. This wound which was given by sin to man's nature, Christ hath undertaken to cure by his grace in his elect: the cure is begun here, but not so perfected, that no scar and blemish remains; and this is the great uncomeliness which sincerity lays its finger on, and covers.

SECT. III.—*Quest.* 2. But here the question may be, How sincerity covers the saints' sinful uncomelinesses?

Ans. I shall answer to this, first *negatively*, and shew how it doth not; second, *affirmatively*, how it doth.

First, Negatively, how sincerity doth not cover them; and that in several particulars. First, Sincerity doth not so cover the saints'

saints' failings, as to take away their sinful nature; wandering thoughts are sins in a saint, as well as in another: a weed will be a weed wherever it grows, though in a garden among the choicest flowers: they mistake then, who, because the saints' sins are covered, deny them to be sins. Secondly, It doth not cover them so as to give us the least ground to think that God doth allow the Christian to commit the least sin more than others; indeed it is inconsistent with God's holiness to give, and with a saint's sincerity to pretend, such a dispensation to be given them.

A father may, out of his indulgence and love to his child, pass by a failing in his waiting on him; as if he spills the wine, or breaks the glass he is bringing to him; but sure he will not allow him to throw it down carelessly or willingly. Though a man may be easily intreated to forgive his friend that wounded him unawares, when he meant him no hurt; yet he will not beforehand give him leave to do it. Thirdly, It doth not so cover them, as that God should not see them, which is not only derogatory to his omniscience, but to his mercy also; for he cannot pardon what he did not first see to be sin: God doth not only see the sins of his children, but their failings are more distasteful to him than others; because the persons in which they are found are so dear, and stand so near unto him. A dunghill in a prince's chamber would be more offensive to him, than one afar off from his court. The Christian's bosom is God's court, throne, temple; there he hath taken up his rest for ever. Sin there must needs be very unsavoury to his nostrils. Fourthly, It doth not so cover them, as that the saints need not confess them, be humbled under them, or sue out a pardon for them; a penny is as due debt as a pound, and therefore to be acknowledged; indeed that which is a sin of infirmity in the committing, becomes a sin of presumption by hiding of it, and hardening in it. Job held fast his integrity throughout his sad conflict; yet those failings which escaped him in the paroxysm of his afflictions brought him upon his knees; *I abhor myself* (saith he), *and repent in dust and ashes*, Job xlii. 6. Fifthly, and lastly, It doth not so cover them, as if our sincerity had the least merit, and deserve that God should for it cover our other failings and infirmities: were there such a thing as obedience absolutely complete, it could not merit pardon for past sins; much less can an imperfect obedience (as sincerity is in a strict sense) deserve it for present failings. Obedience legally perfect, is no more than, as creatures, we owe to the law of God; and how could that pay the debt of sin, which was itself due debt, before any sin was committed? Much less can evangelical obedience (which is sincerity) do it, that falls short by far of that obedience we do owe. If he that owes twenty pounds, merits nothing when he pays the whole sum, then surely he

he doth not, that, of the twenty pounds he owes, pays but twenty pence. Indeed creditors may take what they please, and if they will say half satisfies them, it is discharge enough to the debtor. But where did ever God say he would thus compound with his creatures? God stands as strictly upon it in the gospel-covenant to have the whole debt paid, as he did in the first of works.—There was required a full righteousness in keeping, or a full curse for breaking of the law; so there is in the evangelical; only here the wards of the lock are changed. God requireth this at the creature's hand, in the first covenant, to be personally performed, or endured: but in the gospel-covenant he is content to take both at the hands of Christ our surety, and impute these to the sincere soul that unfeignedly believes on him, and gives up himself to him.

SECT. IV.—Secondly, To shew positively how sincerity covers the saints failings.

1. Sincerity is that property to which pardoning mercy is annexed. True indeed, it is Christ that covers all our sins and failings; but it is only the sincere soul, over which he will cast his skirt, Psal. xxxii. 2. *Blessed is he whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.* None will doubt this; but which is the man? The next words tells us his name: *and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Christ's righteousness is the garment that covers our nakedness and shame of our unrighteousness; faith, the grace that puts this garment on; but what faith? None but the faith unfeigned, as Paul calls it, 2 Tim. i. *Here is water*, said the eunuch, *what doth hinder me to be baptized?* Acts viii. 36. Now mark Philip's answer, ver. 37. *If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest;* as if he had said, Nothing but an hypocritical heart can hinder thee. It is the false heart only finds the door of mercy shut. He that promises to cover the sincere soul's failings, threatens to uncover the hypocrite's impiety, Prov. x. 9. *He that perverteth his way, shall be known*, that is, to his shame.

2. Where sincerity is, God approves of that soul, as a holy righteous person, notwithstanding that mixture of sin which is found in him. As God doth not like the saint's sin for his sincerity, so he doth not unsaint him for that. God will set his hand to Lot's testimonial, that he is a righteous man, though many sins are recorded in the Scripture, which he fell into (and foul ones too); yet Job as perfect, because the frame of his heart was sincere, the tenure of his life holy, and he was rather surprised by them as temptations, than they entertained by him upon choice. Though sincerity doth not blind God's eye, that he should not see the saint's sin, yet it makes him see it with a pitiful eye, and not a wrathful! As a husband, knowing his wife faithful

faithful to him in the main, pities her in other weaknesses, and for all them, accounts her a good wife. *In all this* (saith God) *Job sinned not;* and at the very close of his combat, God brings him out of the field with this honourable testimony to his friends, that had taken so much pains to bring his godliness in question; that his servant Job *had spoken right of him.* Truly God said more of Job, than he durst of himself. He freely confesseth his unadvised froward speeches, and cries out, *I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.* God saw Job's sins attended with sincerity, and therefore judged him perfect and righteous: Job saw his sincerity dashed with many sad failings, and this made him, in the close of all, rather confess his sins with shame, than glory in his grace. God's mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is many times to themselves and their brethren. 1. To themselves: do you think the Prodigal (the emblem of a convert) durst have asked the robe, or desired his father to be at such cost for his entertainment, as his father freely bestowed on him? No, sure: a room in the kitchen, we see, was as high as he durst ask, to be among the meanest servants in the house: Poor soul! he could not conceive he should have such a meeting with his father at first sight. A robe! he might rather look for a rope, at least a rod. A feast at his father's table! O unlooked-for welcome! I doubt not but if any one had met him on his way, and told him that his father was resolved, as soon as he came home, not to let him see his face, but immediately to send him to Bridewell, there to be whipt, and fed with bread and water for many months, and then perhaps he would at last look on him, and take him home, but, in his starving condition—this would have been good news to him; but as God hath strange punishments for the wicked, so he hath strange expressions of love and mercy for sincere souls. He loves to outdo their highest expectations: kiss, robe, feast, all in one day, and that the first day of his return, when the memory of his outrageous wickednesses were fresh, and the stinking scent of his swill and swine, from which he was but newly come, hardly gone! What a great favourite is sincerity with the God of heaven! Again, God's mercy is larger to his children, than their charity is towards one another. Those whom we are ready to unsaint for failings that appear in their lives, God owns for his perfect ones, because of their sincerity. We find Asa's failings expressed, and his perfections vouched by God together, as I may say, in a breath, 2 Chron. xv. 17. It was well God cleared that good man; for had but the naked story of his life (as it stands in the scripture) been recorded, without any express testimony of God's approving him, his godliness would have hazarded a coming under dispute in the opinion of good men; yea, many more with him (concerning

cerning whom we are put out of doubt, because we find them canonized for saints by God himself), would have been cast, if a jury of men, and these holy men too, had gone upon them.— Elijah himself, because he saw none have such zeal for God, and his worship, as to wear their colours openly in a free profession, and hang out a flag of defiance against the idolatry of the times, by a stout opposing it, as he did (which might be their sin), makes a sad moan to God, as if the apostacy had been so general that the whole species of the godly had been preserved in his single person. But God brings this holy man better news, 1 Kings xix. 18. *I have left seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed down to Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him.* As if God had said, Comfort thyself, Elijah; though my number be not great, yet neither is there such a dearth of saints as thou fearest in this ungodly age; it is true, their faith is weak, they dare not jostle with the sins of the age, as thou doest, for which thou shalt not lose thy reward; yet those night-disciples, that for fear carry their light in a dark lanthern, (having some sincerity which keeps them from polluting themselves with these idolatries), must not, shall not be disowned by me.— That God, who bids us be most tender of his lambs, is much more tender of them himself. Observable is that place, 1 John ii. 12, 13, 14. There are three ranks of saints, *fathers, young men, little children;* and the Spirit of God chiefly shews his tender care of them, as by mentioning them first, ver. 12. so by leaving the sweet promise of pardoning mercy in their lap and bosom, rather than either of the other: *Little children, I write unto you, for your sins are forgiven you for my name's sake.* But are not the fathers' sins, and the young men's also forgiven? Yes; who doubts it? But he doth not so particularly apply it to them, as to these; because these, from a sense of their own failings, (out of which the other were more grown), were more prone to dispute against this promise in their own bosoms: yea, he doth not only in plain terms tell them, their sins are forgiven, but meets with the secret objection, which comes from their trembling hearts, in opposition to this good news, taken from their own vileness and unworthiness, and stops its mouth with this, *forgiven for my name's sake*, a greater name, than the name of their biggest sin, which discourages them from believing.

Thirdly, sincerity keeps up the soul's credit at the throne of grace, so that no sinful infirmity can hinder its welcome with God. It is the *regarding of iniquity in the heart*, not the having of it, stops God's ear from hearing our prayer. It is a temptation, not a few have found some work to get over; whether such as they, who see so many sinful failings in themselves, may take the boldness to pray, or, without presuming, to expect audience when they

they have prayed; and sometimes prevails so far, that because they cannot pray as they would, therefore they forbear what they should; much like some poor people that keep from the congregation, because they have not such clothes to come in as they desire. To meet such as are turning away from duty upon this fear, the promises (which are our only ground for prayer, and chief plea in prayer) are accommodated, and fitted to the lowest degree of grace; so that as a picture well drawn, faceth all the room alike that look on it, so the promises of the gospel-covenant smile upon all that sincerely look to God in Christ. It is not said, *If you have faith like a cedar*, but *if you have faith like a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove*, Matt. xvii. 20.; neither is justifying faith beneath miraculous faith in its own sphere of activity; the least faith on Christ, if sincere, as truly removes the mountainous guilt of sin from the soul, as the strongest; hence all the saints are said to have *like precious faith*, 2 Pet. i. 3.—Sarah's faith (which in Genesis we can hardly see, as the story presents it, wherein it appeared) obtains an honourable mention, Heb. xi. where God owns her for a believer, as well as Abraham with his stronger faith. What love is it the promise entails the favours of God upon? not *grace be with them that love our Lord Jesus* with a seraphim's love, but with a *sincere love*, Eph. vi. 24. Not, blessed they who are holy to such measure; this would have fitted but some saints; the greatest part would have gone and said, There is nothing for me, I am not so holy; but, that no saint might lose his portion, it is, *Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness;* and this takes in all the children of God, even to the least babe, that is newly born this day to Christ. The new convert hungers after holiness, and that sincerely. And wherefore all this care so to lay the promises? but to shew that when we go to make use of any promise at the throne of grace, we should not question our welcome for any of our infirmities, so this stamp of sincerity be upon our hearts.—Indeed if sincerity did not this much for the saint, there could not be a prayer accepted of God at the hands of any saint that ever was, or shall be, on earth to the end of the world, because there never was, nor shall be such a saint dwelling in flesh here below, in whom eminent failings may not be found. The apostle would have us know that Elijah, who did as great wonders in heaven and earth too by prayer, as who greater? yet this man God could soon have picked a hole in his coat. Indeed, lest we attribute the prevalency of his prayers to the dignity of his person, and some eminency which he had by himself in grace above others, the Spirit of God tells us, he was of the same make with

his

his poor brethren: *Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed, &c.* James v.; a weak hand with a sincere heart, is able to turn the key in prayer.

CHAP. VIII.

An Account why Sincerity covers the Saints Uncomelinesses.

Quest. NOW follows the fourth query, Whence is it, that sincerity thus covers our failings?

SECT. I.—*Reas.* 1. It flows from the grace of the gospel-covenant, that relaxeth the rigour of the law, which called for complete obedience; by resolving all that into this of sincerity and truth of heart. Thus God, when entering into covenant with Abraham, expresseth himself. *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect*, or sincere, Gen. xvii. 1. As if God had said unto him, Abraham, see here what I expect at thy hands, and what thou mayest expect at mine. I look that thou shouldst *set me before thee*, whom in thy whole course and walking thou wilt sincerely endeavour to please and approve thyself to, and at my hands thou mayest promise thyself what an *Almighty God can do*, both in protecting thee in thy obedience, and pardoning of thee, where thou fallest short of perfect obedience; walk but in the truth of thy heart before me, and in Christ, I will accept thee, and thy sincere endeavour, as kindly as I would have done Adam, if he had kept his place in innocency, and never sinned; indeed a sincere heart by virtue of this covenant might (I mean the covenant would bear him out, and defend him in it, relying on Christ) converse with God, and walk before him with as much freedom, and more familiarity, (by reason of a nearer relation it hath) than ever Adam did, when God and he were best friends. *If our heart condemn us not*, then saith the apostle, *we have confidence towards God.* 1 John iii. 21. we have a boldness of face. And 'tis not the presence of sin in us (as the covenant now stands), that conscience can, or (if rightly informed concerning the tenure of it) will condemn us for; Paul's conscience cleared him, yea, afforded matter of rejoicing, and holy glorying at the same time, that he found sin stirring in him. No, conscience is set by God to judge for him in the private court of our own bosoms, and it is bound up by a law, what sentence to give for, or against, and that in the same, by which Christ himself will acquit or condemn the world at the last day. Now when we go upon trial for our lives before Christ's bar, the

the greatest inquest will be, whether we have been sincere or no? and as Christ will not then condemn the sincere soul, though a thousand sins could be objected against it, so neither can our hearts condemn us.

Quest. But here it may be asked, how comes God so favourable in the covenant of the gospel, to accept an obedience so imperfect at his saints hands, who was so strict with Adam in the first, that the least failing, though but once escaping him, was to be accounted unpardonable?

Answ. The resolution of this question takes in these two particulars.

First, In the covenant God made with mankind in Adam, there was no *sponsor*, or surety, to stand bound to God for man's performance of his part in the covenant (which was perfect obedience), and therefore God could do no other but stand strictly with him; because he had none else, from whom he might recover his glory, and thereby pay himself for the wrong man's fault might do to him: But in the gospel-covenant there is a surety, Christ the righteous, who stands responsible to God for all the defaults and failings which occur in the Christian's course. The Lord Jesus doth not only take upon him to discharge the vast sums of those sins, which he finds them charged with before conversion; but for all those dribbling debts, which afterwards, through their infirmity, they contract. *If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins*, 1 John ii. 2., so that God may, without any impeachment to his justice, cross his saints debts, which he is paid for by their surety; 'tis mercy indeed to the saints, but justice to Christ, that he should: O happy conjunction, where mercy and justice thus conspire, and kiss each other!

Secondly, God did, and well might require full and perfect obedience of man in the first covenant, because he was in a perfect state, of full power and ability to perform it, so that God looked to reap no more than he had planted. But in the gospel-covenant God doth not at first infuse into the believer full grace, but true grace; and accordingly he expects not full obedience, but sincere. He considers our frame, and every believer is (if I may so say) rated in God's books, as the stock of grace is which God gives him to set up withal at first.

SECT. II.—*Reas.* 2. The second reason may be taken from the great love he bears, and liking he takes, to this disposition of heart, upon which follows this act of grace, to cover their failings where he spies it; 'tis the nature of love to cover infirmities, even to a multitude. Esther transgressed the law, by coming into Ahasuerus's presence before she was sent for, but love soon erected a pardon-office in the king's breast, to forgive her that fault;

fault; and truly she did not find so much favour in the eyes of that great monarch, as the sincere soul doth in the eyes of the great God. He did not more delight in Esther's beauty, than God doth in this, Prov. xi. 20. *Such as are upright in their way, are his delight;* his soul closeth with that man, as one that suits with the disposition of his own holy nature, one whose heart is right with his heart; and so with infinite content to see a ray of his own excellency sparkle in his creature, he delights in him, and takes him by the hand, to lift him up into the bosom of his love; a better chariot, I trow, than that which Jehu preferred Jehonadab to, for his faithfulness to him. You seldom find any spoken of as upright in the scripture, that are passed over with a plain naked inscription of their uprightness; but some circumstance there is, which, like the costly work and curious engraving about some tombs, tell the passenger they are no ordinary men that lie there. God, speaking of Job's uprightness, represents him as a nonsuch in his age. *None like him in the earth, a perfect man, and upright;* mention was before made of his vast estate, and in that also he was a nonsuch; but when God comes to glory over satan, by telling what a servant he had to wait on him, he doth not count this worth telling the devil of: Not, hast thou considered my servant Job, Job i. 8. that there is none so *rich?* but, none so *upright.* When God speaks of Caleb's uprightness, see to what a height he exalts him, Numb. xiv. 14. *But my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land,* &c. As if God had said, Here's a man I do not count myself disparaged to own for my servant, and special favourite; he is one that carries more worth in him than the whole multitude of murmuring Israelites besides; he had *another spirit,* that is, for excellency and nobleness far above the rest; and wherein did this appear? The next words resolve us; *He hath followed me fully:* Now that which gained him this great honour from God's own mouth, we shall find to be his sincerity, and especially in that business when sent to search the land of Canaan, Joshua xiv. 7. and ver. 9. compared. He had great temptations to tell another tale. The Israelites were so sick of their enterprize, that he should be the welcomest messenger that brought the worst news, from which they might have some colour for their murmuring against Moses, who had brought them into such straits; and of twelve that were sent, there were ten that suited their answer to this discontented humour of the people: so that by making a contrary report to theirs, he did not only come under the suspicion of a liar, but hazard his life among an enraged people; yet such was the courage of this holy man, faithfulness to his trust, and trust in his God, that, as he saith himself, ver. 7. *He*

brought

brought him (that is, Moses who had sent him) *word again, as it was in his heart;* that is, he did not for fear or favour accommodate himself, but what in his conscience he thought true, that he spake; and this, because it was such an eminent proof of his sincerity, is called by Moses, ver. 9. *following God fully;* for which the Lord erects such a pillar of remembrance over his head, that shall stand as long as that scripture itself. To give out one instance more, and that is of Nathaniel, at first sight of whom Christ cannot forbear, but lets all about him know how highly he was in his favour. *Behold* (saith he of him) *an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile*, John i. 47. Christ's heart (like the babe in Elizabeth's womb, when Mary saluted her) seemed thus to leap at the coming of Nathaniel, yea, comes forth in this expression, not to flatter him into an over-weening conceit of himself (Christ knew what an humble soul he spake to), but to bear witness to his own grace in him, especially this of sincerity; that knowing what a high price and value heaven sets upon the head of this grace, they might like wise merchants store themselves with it more abundantly; his simplicity of heart made him an *Israelite indeed;* many goodly shews and pompous outsides were to be seen among the Pharisees, but they were a company of base projectors and designers. Even when some of them came to Christ, extolling him for his sincerity, *Master, we know thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth*, Matt. xxii. 16. then did they play the hypocrites, and had a plot to decoy him by their glossing speech into danger; as you may perceive, ver. 15. *They came that they might entangle him:* but good Nathaniel had no plot in his head, in his coming, but to find the Messiah he looked for, and eternal life by him; and therefore, though he was for the present wrapped up in that common errror of the times, that *no prophet could come out of Galilee*, John vii. 52. much less so great a one as the Messiah, out of such an obscure place in Galilee as Nazareth; yet Christ, seeing the honesty and uprightness of his heart, doth not suffer his ignorance and error to prejudice him in his thoughts of him.

SECT. III.—Now to give some account, why this grace of sincerity is so taking with, and delightful to God, that it even captivates him in love to the soul where he finds it. There are two things which are the inseparable companions of sincerity, yea, effects flowing from it, that are very taking to draw love both from God and man.

First, Sincerity makes the soul willing. When 'tis clogged with so many infirmities, as to disable it from the full performance of its duty, yet then the soul stands on tip-toes to be gone after it; as the hawk upon the hand, as soon as ever it sees her game, launcheth forth, and would be upon the wing after it, though

possibly held by its sheath to the fist: Thus the sincere soul is inwardly pricked and provoked by a strong desire after its duty, though kept back by infirmities; a perfect heart and a willing mind are joined together, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9. 'Tis David's counsel to his son Solomon, *to serve God with a perfect heart, and a willing mind.* A false heart is a shifting heart, puts off its work so long as it dares, and 'tis little thanks to set about it when the rod is taken down; yet hypocrites are like tops that go no longer than they are whipt; but the sincere soul is ready and forward: it doth not want will to do a duty, when it wants skill and strength how to do it. *The Levites* (2 Chron. xxix. 34.) *are said to be more upright in heart, to sanctify themselves, than the Priests were.* How appeared that? In this, that they were more forward and willing to the work. No sooner did the word come out of the good king's mouth, concerning a reformation, ver. 10. but presently the Levites arose to sanctify themselves; but some of the priests had not such a mind to the business, and therefore were not so soon ready, ver. 34. shewing more policy than piety therein, as if they would stay and see first how the times would prove, before they would engage. Reformation-work is but an icy path, which cowardly spirits love to have well beaten by others, before they dare come on it: But sincerity is of better metal: like the true traveller, that no weather shall keep from going his journey when set, the upright man looks not at the clouds, stands not thinking of this or that to discourage him, but takes his warrant from the word of God, and having that, nothing but a countermand from the same God that sets him at work, shall turn him back. His heart is uniform to the will of God. If God saith, *seek my face*, it rebounds and echoes back again, *thy face will I seek.* Yea, Lord, as if David had said with a good will, thy word is press-money enough to carry me from this duty to that, whither thou pleasest. May be, when the sincere soul is about a duty, he doth it weakly; yet this very willingness of the heart is wonderfully pleasing to God. How doth it affect and take the father, when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing (that may be as much as he can well lift) to see him not stand and shrug at the command as hard, but run to it, and put forth his whole strength about it (though at last may be he cannot do it), yet the willingness of the child pleaseth him so, that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than to provoke him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over his disciples' infirmities: *the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.* O! this obedience, that, like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes sweetly on God's palate, and such is sincere obedience.

Secondly, Sincerity makes the soul very open and free to God: Though

Though the sincere soul hath many infirmities, yet it desires to cloak and hide none of them from God; no, if it could, it would not; and this is that which delights God exceedingly. To be sure, he'll cover what such a soul uncovers, 1 John i. 12. *If we confess our sins, he is just and faithful to forgive.*

It was a high piece of ingenuity and clemency in Augustus, that having promised by a proclamation a great sum of money, to any that should bring him the head of a famous pirate, did yet when the pirate (who had heard of this) brought it himself to him, and laid it at his foot, not only pardon him for his former offences against him, but reward him for his great confidence in his mercy. Truly thus doth God; though his wrath be revealed against all sin and unrighteousness, yet when the soul itself comes freely and humbles itself before him, he cannot stretch forth his arm to strike that soul which gives such glory to his mercy; and this the sincere heart doth. Indeed the hypocrite, when he has sinned, hides it, as Achan his wedge of gold; he sits brooding on his lust, as Rachel on her *father's idols*. It is as hard getting a hen off her nest, as such a one to come off his lusts, and disclose them freely to God. If God himself find him not out, he will not bewray himself. I cannot set out the different disposition of the sincere and false heart in this matter, better than by the like in a mercenary servant, and a child; when a servant (except it be one of a thousand) breaks a glass, or spoils any of his master's goods, all his care is to hide it from his master, and therefore throws the pieces of it away into some dark hole or corner, where he thinks they shall never be found; and now he is not troubled for the wrong he hath done his master, but glad that he hath handled the matter so as not to be discovered. Thus the hypocrite would count himself a happy man, could he but lay his sin out of God's sight: it is not the treason he dislikes, but fears to be known that he is the traitor; and therefore though it be as unfeasible to blind the eye of the Almighty, as with our hand to cover the face of the sun, that it should not shine, yet the hypocrite will attempt it. We find a woe denounced against such, Isa. xxix. 15. *Woe unto them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord.* This is a sort of sinners whose care is not to make their peace when they have offended, but to hold their peace, and stand demurely before God, as Gehazi before his master, as if they been no where but where they should be. These are they whom God will put to shame to purpose. The Jews were far gone in this hypocrisy, when they justified themselves as a holy people, and put God so hard to it, as to make him prove his charge, rather than confess what was too true and apparent; which God upbraids them for, Jer. ii. 23. *How canst thou say, I am not polluted? I have not gone after Balaam; see thy way*

in the valley, and know what thou hast done. Hast thou such a whorish forehead to justify thyself, and hypocritical heart to draw a fair cover over so foul practices; would you yet pass for saints, and be thought a people unpolluted? now mark, 'tis not long, but this hypocritical people, that thus hid their sin, hath shame enough: *As the thief is ashamed when he is found*, saith the prophet, ver. 26. *so is the house of Israel ashamed;* that is, as the thief, who at first is so insolent, as to deny the fact he is accused of, yet when, upon search, the stolen goods are found about him, and he brought to justice for it, then he is put to double shame for his theft, and impudence also in justifying himself; so is it with this people (and with all hypocrites), though, while in peace, and at ease, they brag and are bold, yea, seem to scorn to be thought what they indeed are; yet there is a time coming (which, ver. 24. is called, *their month wherein they shall be found)* when God's hue and cry shall overtake them, his terrors ransack their consciences, and bring forth what they so stiffly denied, making it appear to themselves and others also, what juggling and deceit they have used to shift off their sin. It is easy to think what shame will cover their faces, and weigh down their heads while this is doing. God loves to befool those who think they play their game so wisely, because, with Ahab, they fight against God in a disguise, and will not be known to be the man. But the sincere soul takes another course, and speeds better; as a child, when he hath committed a fault, doth not stay till others go, and tell his father what the matter is, nor till his father makes it appear by his frowning countenance that it is come to his ear, but freely, and of his own accord, goes presently to his father (being prompted by no other thing than the love he bears to his dear father, and the sorrow with which his heart grows every moment he stays, bigger and bigger withal for his offence), and easeth his aching heart, by a free and full confession of his fault at his father's foot; and thus, with plain-heartedness, giving his offence the weight of every aggravating circumstance, so that if the devil himself should come after him to glean up what he hath left, he would hardly find wherewithal to make it appear blacker: Thus doth the sincere soul to God, adding to his simplicity in confession of his sin, such a flow of sorrow, that God, seeing his dear child in such danger of being carried down too far towards despair, (if good news from him come not speedily to stay him), cannot but tune his voice, rather into a strain of comforting him in his mourning, than chiding him for his sin.

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

Of the odious Nature of Hypocrisy, and Hatefulness of it to God.

Use 1. DOTH sincerity cover all defects? Then hypocrisy uncovers the soul, and strips it naked to its shame before God, when set forth with the richest embroidery of other excellencies. This is such a scab, that frets into the choicest perfections, and alters the complexion of the soul in God's eye, more than leprosy or pox can do to the fairest face in ours. It is observable, the different character that is given of those two kings of Judah, Asa and Amaziah. Of the first, see 1 Kings xv. 14. *The high places were not removed, nevertheless Asa his heart was perfect with the Lord all his day.* He passeth current for a gracious person, and that with a *non obstante, nevertheless his heart was perfect;* sincerity, like true gold, hath grains allowed for its lightness; his infirmities are not mentioned to stain his honour, and prejudice him in the opinion of any; but rather as the wart or mole, which the curious limner expresseth on purpose, the more to set forth the beauty of the other parts: so his failings are recorded to cast a greater lustre upon his sincerity; which could, notwithstanding these sins, gain him such a testimony from God's own mouth. But of Amaziah, see 2 Chron. xxv. 2. *He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.* The matter of his actions was good, but the scope and drift of his heart in them was naught, and this but makes a foul blot upon all, and turns his right into wrong; wherein his hypocrisy appeared is expressed, 2 Kings xiv. 3. *He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father, he did according to all things that Joash his father did.* He did for a while what David did, *as to the matter,* but imitated Joash, *as to the manner,* whose goodness was calculated to please man rather than God, as appeared in the latter end of his reign upon the death of his good uncle Jehoiada; him did Amaziah write after, and not David in his uprightness; thus we see Asa, his uprightness saves him in the midst of many failings; but hypocrisy condemns Amaziah doing that which is right. Sincerity, it is the life of all our graces, and puts life into all our duties; and as life makes beautiful, and keeps the body sweet, so sincerity the soul, and all it doth. A prayer breathed from a sincere heart, it is heaven's delight; take away sincerity, and God saith of it, as Abraham of Sarah (whom living, he loved dearly, and laid in his bosom), *Bury the dead out of my sight;* he hides his eye, stops his nostril, as when some poisonous carrion

is before us. *Bring no more vain oblations, incense is abomination to me ; the calling of your assemblies I cannot away with ; your appointed feasts my soul hateth, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them.* What stinking thing is this that God cries so out upon ? It is nothing but hypocrisy. Surely, friends, that must needs be very loathsome, which makes God speak so coarsely of his own ordinances, yea, makes them a Nebushtan, prayer no prayer, but a mere idol to be broken in pieces ; faith no faith, but a fancy and a delusion ; repentance no repentance, but a loud lie, Psalm lxxviii. 34. *They returned, and enquired early after God ;* see how the spirit of God glosseth upon this, ver. 36, 37. *Nevertheless they did flatter with their lips, and they lied unto him with their tongues, for their heart was not right with him.* It smoked God out of his own house, and made him out of love with that place, whereof he had said, it should be his resting place for ever.

It brought the wrath of God upon that unhappy people to the uttermost ; mark how the commission runs, which God gave the Assyrian, who was the bloody executioner of his fierce wrath upon them, Isa. x. 5, 6. *O Assyrian, the rod of my anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down as mire in the street.* See Jer. vii. 10, 11, 12, 13, ver. There needs not the coroner to be sent for, or a jury go upon this miserable people, to find out how they came to their dismal end ; they were an *hypocritical nation,* that was it they died of. God had rather see the abomination of desolation standing in his temple, making havock of all, than the abomination of dissimulation mocking him to his face, while they worship him with their lips, and their lusts with their hearts. Of the two, 'tis more tolerable, in God's account, to see a Belshazzar, that never had a name of being his servant, to quaff and carouze it to his gods, prophanely, in the bowels of the sanctuary, than for a people that would pass for his servants, to pollute them in his own worship, by their cursed hypocrisy : If God be dishonoured, woe to that man, of all, that doth it under a shew of honouring him. God singles out the hypocrite, as that sort of sinner, whom he would deal with hand to hand, and set himself, even in this life, to bear witness against, in a more extraordinary manner than others. The thief, murderer, and other the like sinners, provision is made by God, that the magistrate should meet with them ; they come under his cognizance ; but the hypocrite, he is one that sins more secretly. God alone is able to find him out, and he hath undertaken it, Ezek. xiv. 7. *For every one of the house of Israel, which separated himself from me, and setteth*

setteth up his idols in his heart, and cometh to a prophet, to enquire of him concerning me [an excellent description of a hypocrite; he is one that denies God his heart, reserving it for idols, or his lust, yet is as forward as any to enquire after God in his ordinances]; *I the Lord will answer him by myself.* And how shall he answer him? *And I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and ye shall know that I am the Lord*, ver. 8. That is, my judgments shall be so remarkable on him, that he shall be a spectacle of my wrath for others to see, and speak of. Thus God pays the hypocrites often in this life, as Ananias and Saphira, who died by the hand of God with a lie sticking in their throats; and Judas, who purchased nothing by his hypocritical trade, but a halter to hang himself withal; his playing the hypocrite with Christ ended in his playing the devil upon himself, when he became his own executioner. But if the hypocrite at any time steals out of the world, before his vizard falls off, and the wrath of God falls on him, it will meet him sure enough in hell, and it will be poor comfort to him there, to think how he hath cheated his neighbours, in arriving at hell, whom they so confidently thought under sail for heaven. The good opinion which he hath left of himself in those that are on earth, will cool no flames for him in hell, where lodgings are taken up, and bespoke for the hypocrite, as the chief guest expected in that infernal court; all other sinners seem but as younger brethren in damnation to the hypocrite, under whom, as the great heir, they receive every one their portion of wrath, bequeathed to them by the justice of God, Matt. xxiv. 51. there the evil servant is threatened by his master, that *he will cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with hypocrites.*

Quest. But why should God be so angry with the hypocrite? He seems a tame creature to other sinners, that like wild beasts rage and rave, not fearing to open their mouth like so many wolves, against heaven, as if they would tear God out of his throne by their blasphemies and horrid impieties. The hypocrite is not thus loaded with impudence, to sin at noon-day, and spread his tent with Absalom on the house-top: If he be naught, it is in a corner, his maiden-blush modesty will not suffer him to declare his sin, and be seen in the company of it abroad; nay, he denies himself of many sins, which others maintain; and walks in exercise of many duties, which the atheistical spirits of the world deride and scorn: Why then should the hypocrite, that lives like a saint to others, be more distasteful to him?

Ans. Indeed the hypocrite at first blush may be taken for a kind of saint, by such as see only his outside, as he passeth by in his holiday dress, which he is beholden to, for all the reputation

he hath in the thoughts of others, and therefore is fitly by one called the stranger's saint, but a devil to those that know him better: He is like some cunning cripple, that is fain to borrow help from art, to hide the defects of nature; such as false hair to cover his baldness, an artificial eye to cover his blindness from others sight; and the like for other parts: Here is much ado made to commend him for some beautiful person to others; but what a monster would this man appear, should one but see him through the key-hole, as he is in his bed-chamber, where all these are laid aside? Truly, such a one, and far more scareful, would the hypocrite be found, when out of his acting robes, which he makes use of only when he comes forth upon the stage, to play the part of a saint before others. It were enough to affright us, only to see the hypocrite uncased; what then will it be to himself, when he shall be laid open before men and angels? So odious this generation is to God, that it is not safe standing near them! Moses, that knew Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, better than the people, who, taken with their seeming zeal, flocked after them in throngs, commands them to depart from the tents of those wicked men, except they had a mind to be consumed with them; such horrid hypocrisy he expected vengeance would soon overtake. But that it may appear to be a sin exceeding sinful, I shall give a few aggravations of it, in which so many reasons will be wrapt, why it is so odious to God.

First, Hypocrisy is a sin that offers violence to the very light of nature: that light which convinceth us there is a God, tells us he is to be served, and that in truth also, or all is to no purpose. A lie is a sin that would fly in the face of a heathen, and hypocrisy is the loudest lie, because it is given to God himself; so Peter told that dissembling wretch, Acts v. 3. *Why hath satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?* v. 4. *thou hast lied not to man, but unto God.*

Secondly, Hypocrisy cannot so properly be said to be one single sin, as the sinfulness of other sins; it is among sins, as sincerity among graces; now that is not one grace, but an ornament, that beautifies and graces all other graces. The preciousness of *faith* is, that it is unfeighed, and of love, to be without dissimulation. Thus the odiousness of sin is, when they are committed in hypocrisy. David aggravates the sin of those jeering companions, who made him their table-talk, and could not taste their cheer, except seasoned with some salt jest quibbled out at him, with this, that they were *hypocritical mockers*, Psalm xxxv. 16.; they did it slily, and wrapt up their scoffs ('tis like) in such language as might make some think (who did not well observe them) that they applauded him. There is a way of commending, which some have learned to use, when they mean to cast the greatest

scorn

scorn upon those they hate bitterly, and these hypocritical mockers deserve the chair to be given them from all other scorners.—Fevers are counted malignant according to the degree of putrefaction that is in them. Hypocrisy is the very putrefaction and rottenness of the heart; the more of this putrid stuff there is in any sin, the more malignant it is. David speaks of the iniquity of his sin, Psalm xxxii. 5. *I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid; I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.* This sin seems very probably to have been his adultery with Bathsheba, and murder of Uriah, by his long *keeping silence*, ver. 3. by the pardon he had immediately given him upon *confessing*, ver. 5. which we know Nathan delivered to him, and by his further purpose to continue confessing of it, which appeared by the mournful Psalm (the li.) that followed upon his discourse with Nathan. Now David, to make the pardoning mercy of God more illustrious, saith he did not only forgive his sin, but the iniquity of his sin; and what was that? Surely the worst that can be said of his complicated sin, is, that there was so much hypocrisy in it, he woefully juggled with God and man in it; this, I do not doubt to say, was the iniquity of his sin, and put a colour deeper on than the blood which he shed. And the rather I lay the accent there, because God himself, when he would set out the heinousness of this sin, seems to do it rather from the hypocrisy in the fact, than the fact itself, as appears by the testimony given this holy man, 1 Kings xv. 5. *David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* Were there not other wry steps that David took besides this? Doth the Spirit of God, by excepting this, declare his approbation of all else that he ever did? No sure, the Spirit of God records other sins, that escaped this eminent servant of the Lord; but all those are drowned here, and this mentioned as the only stain of his life. But why? surely because there appeared less sincerity, yea, more hypocrisy in this one sin, than in all his other put together: though David in them was wrong as to the matter of his actions, yet his heart was more right in the manner of committing them. But here his sincerity was sadly wounded, though not to the total destruction of the habit, yet to lay it in a long swoon, as to any actings thereof. And truly the wound went very deep, when that grace was stabbed in which did run the life-blood of all the rest. We see, then, God hath reason (though his mercy prompted him, yea, his covenant obliged him, not to let his child die of this wound, I mean finally miscarry of this sin, either through want of repentance on the one hand, or pardoning mercy on the other) so to heal

heal it, that a scar might remain upon the place, a mark upon the sin, whereby others might know how odious hypocrisy is to God.

Thirdly, Those considerations which may seem at first to lessen, and pare off something from the heinousness of the hypocrite's sin, viz. That he walks in a religious habit, hath a form of piety which others want, performs duties which others neglect; these and the like are so far from taking from, that they add a further weight of aggravation to it. Let us consider the hypocrite in a two-fold respect, and this will appear, either in things he trades about; or, secondly, in the things he lays claim to, as relation to God, interest in Christ, consolations of the Spirit, and the like; these are things of high price; a miscarriage about these must be somewhat suitable to their high nature. As is the wool, so the thread and cloth, coarse or fine. The prophane person pretends not to these, he cannot spin so fine a thread, because the work he deals in is coarser; all his impieties will not have so high a price of wrath set upon them, which he hath (being ignorant of God, and a stranger to the ways of God) committed, as the hypocrite's.

SECT. I.—First, The hypocrite trades in the duties of God's worship. Judas sits down with the rest of the apostles at the passover, and bids himself welcome as confidently, as if he were the best guest, the holiest of all the company. The proud pharisee gets to the temple as soon as the broken-hearted publican: but what work doth the hypocrite make with these things? that would be known indeed. Sad work, the Lord knows, or else God would not so abominate them, as to think he hears a dog bark, or a wolf howl all the while they are praying. We think David had a curious hand at the harp, that could pacify the evil raging spirit of melancholy Saul; but what a harsh unhappy stroke have they in the duties of God's worship, that are able to make the sweet meek Spirit of God angry, yea, break out into fury against them! And no wonder, if we consider but these two things.

1. The hypocrite does no less than mock God in all his duties, and of all things God can least bear that; *God will not be mocked.* Christ preached his doctrine when he cursed the fig-tree, which did by her green leaves mock the passenger, making him come for fruit, and go away without any; had it wanted leaves, as well as fruit, it had escaped that curse. Every lie is a mocking of him to whom it is told; because such a one goes to cheat him, and thereby puts the fool upon him: *Why hast thou mocked me* (said Dalilah to Sampson), *and told me lies?* Judg. xvi. 10. as if she had said (as is usual upon the like with us), Do you make a fool of me? I leave it to the hypocrites to think seriously what

what he is going to make of God, when he puts up his hypocritical services. God's command was, none should *appear before him empty:* this the hypocrite doth, and therefore mocks God; he comes indeed full-mouthed, but empty-hearted. As to the formality of a duty, he oft exceeds the sincere Christian; he, if any, may truly be called a *master of ceremonies;* because all that he entertains God with in duty, lies in the courtship of his tongue and knee. How abhorrent this is to God, may easily be judged by the disdain which even a wise man would express to be so served; better to pretend no kindness, than pretending to intend none; it is the heart God looks at in duty: if the wine be good, he can drink it out of a wooden cup; but let the cup be never so gilded, and no wine in it, he makes account that man mocks him, that would put it into his hand. It was Christ's charge against Sardis, Rev. iii. 2. *I have not found thy works perfect before God;* I have not found them *full before God*, as the original hath it. Sincerity fills our duty, and all our actions; and mark that phrase, *before God*, which implies that this church retained such an outward form of devotion, as might keep up her credit before men; she had a name to live, but her works were not full before God; he pierced them deeper than man's probe could go, and judgeth her by what he found her within.

2. The hypocrite performs the duties of God's worship on some base design or other, and this makes him yet more abominable to God, who disdains to have his holy ordinances prostituted to serve the hypocrite's lust, only used as a stream to turn about his mill, and handsomely effect his carnal projects. When Absalom had formed his plot within his own natural bosom, and was big with his treason, as ever cockatrice was with her poisonous eggs; to Hebron he goes in all haste, and that, forsooth, to pay an old vow, which in the time of his affliction he made to the Lord, 2 Sam. xv. 10, 11. Who would not think the man was grown honest, when he begins to think of paying his old debts? But the wretch meant nothing less; his errand thither was to lay his treason under the warm wing of religion, that the reputation he should gain thereby might help the sooner to hatch it. And I wish that as Absalom died without a son to keep his name in remembrance, so that none had been left behind to inherit his cursed hypocrisy, that the world might have grown into a happy ignorance of so monstrous a sin; but alas, this is but a vain wish; this kind of hypocrisy yet lives, yea, comes as boldly to out-face God in his worship as ever; many making no better use of the exercise of it, than some do of their sedans, to carry them unseen to the enjoyment of their lust. And is it any wonder, that God, who hath appointed his ordinances for such high and holy ends, should abhor the hypocrite, who thus debaseth them in the service

vice of the devil? Did you invite some to a costly feast at your house, who, instead of feeding on the dainties you had provided for them, should take and throw all to their dogs under the table, how would you like your guest? The hypocrite is he that casts God's holy things to his dogs. God invites us to his ordinances, as to a rich feast, where he is ready to entertain us, in sweet communion with himself; what horrid impiety is it then that the hypocrite commits? who, when he is set at God's table, feeds not of these dainties himself, but throws all to his lusts, some to his pride, and some to his covetousness; propounding to himself no other end in coming to them, than to make provision for these lusts, as Hamor and Sechem his son, who, when they would persuade the people of their city to submit to circumcision, used this as the great argument to move them, that they should grow rich by the hand. *If every male among us be circumcised, as they are circumcised, shall not their cattle and their substance, and every beast of theirs, be ours?* Gen. xxxiv. 21, 22. A goodly argument was it not, in business of such a high nature, as coming under a solemn ordinance? They rather speak as if they were going to a horse-market, or cow-fair, than to a religious duty. Truly, though most hypocrites have more wit, than thus to print their thoughts, and let the world read what is writ in their hearts; yet as Queen Mary said of Calais, if she were ript up, it would be found in her heart; so some such low things, as vain-glory, worldly profit, &c. would be found engraven in the breast of all hypocrites, as that they most aim at in the duties of religion.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Consider the hypocrite in the things he lays claim to, and they were no small privileges; relation to God, interest in Christ. Who is more forward to saint himself, to pretend to the graces and comforts of the spirit, than the hypocrite? As we see in the Pharisees, whose great design was to get a name, and that not such as the great ones of the earth have, for prowess, worldly majesty, and the like, but for sanctity and holiness; and they had it, if it would do them any good. *Verily*, saith Christ, *they have their reward*, Mat. vi. 2. They would be taken for great saints, and so they are by the multitude, who did so applaud them for their holiness, which faced their outside, that they had a proverb, If but two could be saved, one of the two should be a pharisee. We read of some that *profess they know God, but in works they deny him*, Tit. i. 16. They boldly brag of their acquaintance with God, and would be thought great favourites of his, though their lives are antipodes to heaven: so, Rev. iii. 9. we meet with some *that say they are Jews, and are not, but lie*. They dwell sure by ill neighbours; none would say so much for them, but themselves; the hypocrite is so ambitious

to

to pass for a saint, that he commonly is a greater censurer of the true graces of others, as too much hindering the prospect of his own; like Herod, who (as Eusebius writes), being troubled at the baseness of his own birth, burnt the ancient genealogies of the Jews, the better to defend his own pretended noble descent. Who now is able to give a full accent to this high-climbing sin of hypocrisy? It is a sin that highly reproacheth God, to have such a vile wretch claim kindred with him. Christ indeed is not ashamed to call the poorest saints brethren, but he disdains to have his name seen upon a rotten-hearted hypocrite; as princes to have their effigies stamped on base metals: What scorn was put upon that mock prince, Perkin Warbeck, who having got some fragments of courtship, and being tutored how to act his part, was presented to the world as Edward IV. of this nation; but when he had aped a-while the state of a prince, he was taken, and with his base ignoble pedigree, wrote in large letters, and pinned at his back, was sent about, that wherever he came, he might carry his shame with him, till in the end he was sent to act the last part of his play at the gallows! But what is all this to the hypocrite's portion, who, for abusing others here with a seeming sanctity, as if indeed he was of heavenly extraction, a child of God, and heir of glory, shall be brought at the great day to be hissed at by men and angels, and after he hath been put to this open shame, be thrown deepest into hell. Of all sinners, he doth most mischief in this world, and therefore shall have most torment in the other. There is a double mischief which none are so likely to be guilty of as the hypocrite, by his seeming saintship. The one he doth while his credit holds, and he passeth for a child of God in the opinion of his neighbours; the other, when his reputation is cracked, and he discovered to be what he is, a hypocrite, The mischief he doth when his mask is on, is, as a deceiver: Machiavel knew what he did in commending to princes a resemblance of religion, though he forbad any more.— It hath been found the most taking bait, to decoy people into their snare, who come in apace, when religion is the flag that is set up. Ehud could not have thought on a surer key to open all doors, and procure him admittance into King Eglon's presence, than to give out he had a message from the Lord to him; this raised such an expectation, and bred such a confidence, that room is made for him; presently all depart, and he is left alone with the king; yea, the king will rise to hear his message that comes from the Lord, and so gives him a greater advantage to run him into the guts. Had not some in our days pretended highly to saintship, I doubt not but they would have found the door shut, where now they have too much welcome, and find it easy to procure belief to their errors. Even the elect are in some danger, when

when one cried up for a saint, is the messenger that brings the error to town, and that under the notion of a message from God. I confess the hypocrite acts his part so handsomely, that he may do some good accidentally; his glistering profession, heavenly discourse, excellent gifts in prayer or preaching, may affect much the sincere soul, and be an occasion of real good to his soul; as the stage-player, though his tears be counterfeit, may stir up, by his seeming passion, real sorrow in his spectators, so as to make them weep in earnest; thus the hypocrite, acting his part with false affections, may be a means to draw forth and excite the Christian's true graces; but then is such a one much more in danger to be ensnared by his error, because he will not be readily suspicious of any thing that he brings, whom he hath found really helpful to his grace or comfort; and thus the good the hypocrite doth, makes him but able to do the greater hurt in the end. Sisera had better have gone without Jael's butter and milk, than by them to be laid asleep against she came with her nail; and it had been far happier for many in our days, not to have tasted of the gifts and seeming graces of some, than to have been so taken with this sweet wine, as to drink themselves drunk into an admiration of their persons, which hath laid them asleep, and thereby given them, whom they have applauded so much, but advantage the more easily to fasten their nail to their heads—errors, I mean, to their judgments. The other mischief the hypocrite doth, is, when discovered, and that is, as he is a scandal to the ways of God, and servants of God. It is said of Sampson, *The dead which he slew at his death, were more than they which he slew in his life*, Judg. xvi. 30. Truly the hypocrite doth more hurt when he is discovered, which is the death of his profession, than when he seemed to be alive. The wicked worldlings, who are not long seeking a staff to beat the saints with, have now one put into their hands by the hypocrite. O how they can run division upon this harsh note, and besmear the face of all professors with the dirt they see upon one false brother's coat, as if they could take the length of all their feet by the measure of one hypocrite! Hence comes such base language as this: They are all of a pack, not one better than another. Indeed this is very absurd reasoning; as if one should say, no coin were current, and right silver, because now and then a brass shilling is found among the rest; but this language fits the mouth of the ungodly world; and woe be to the man that makes these arrows for them by his hypocrisy, which they shoot against the saints! Better he had been thrown with a millstone about his neck into the sea, than have lived to give such an occasion for the enemy to blaspheme!

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Where all are stirred up to put themselves upon the Trial, whether sincere or not; three Arguments used to provoke to the Work; and four false Characters, by which the Hypocrite flatters himself into a Conceit of being Upright.

Use 2. SECONDLY, Doth sincerity cover all a saint's infirmities? this shews how needful it is for every one to try his ways, and search narrowly his heart, whether he be sincere or hypocritical.

SECT. I.—First, All depends on it, even all thou art worth in another world; it is thy making or marring for ever; Psalm cxxv. 5. *Do good, O Lord, to them that are upright in heart; as for such as turn aside to crooked ways, the Lord will lead them forth with the workers of iniquity;* that is the end the hypocrite is sure to come to; he would indeed then fain pass for a saint, and crowd in among the godly, but God *shall lead him forth with the workers of iniquity*, company that better befits him; 'tis sincerity shall carry it in that day. *I will come* (saith Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 19.) *to you shortly, and will know, not the speech of them that are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but power. What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love?* O friends, not Paul, but Christ will shortly come unto us, and he will know not the speech and soothing language of such as are puffed up with an empty name of profession, but will know the power, gauge the heart, and see what is in it: now will ye that he come with a rod, or in love? to judge you as hypocrites, or to give you the *euge* of a faithful servant? Doth not he spend his time ill, that takes pains in his trade, and lays out all his stock on such a commodity, which, when he opens his stall, will be seized for false ware, and he clapped up for abusing the country! All that ever the hypocrite did, will in the great day of Christ be found counterfeit, and he be sure to be laid by the heels in hell, for going about to cheat God and man; every man's works shall then be manifest; that day shall declare it. Even the sincere Christian, where he hath tampered with hypocrisy, shall lose that his work; but the hypocrite, with his work, his soul also.

Secondly, Consider, hypocrisy lies close in the heart; if thou beest not very careful, thou mayest easily pass a false judgment on thyself; they who were sent to search the cellar under the Parliament, at first saw nothing but coals and winter-provision; but

but upon a review, when they came to throw away that stuff, they found all but provision for the devil's kitchen; then the mystery of iniquity was uncased, and the barrels of powder appeared. How many are there that, from some duties of piety they perform, some seeming zeal they express in profession, presently cry, *omnia bene*, and are so kind to themselves, as to vote themselves good Christians, who, did they but take the pains to throw these aside, they might find a foul hypocrite at the bottom of them all; hypocrisy often takes up her lodging next door to sincerity, and so she passes unfound, the soul not suspecting hell can be so near heaven. And as hypocrisy, so sincerity is hard to be discovered; this grace often lies low in the heart (like the sweet violet in some valley, or near some brook), hid with thorns and nettles, infirmities I mean; so that there requires both care and wisdom, that we neither let the weed of hypocrisy stand, nor pluck up the herb of grace in its stead.

Thirdly, it is feasible. I do not set you about an endless work; the heart of man, I confess, is as a ruffled skein of silk, not easily unsnarled, yet, with a faithful use of the means, it may be disentangled, and wound up on the right bottom of sincerity or hypocrisy. Job, when satan and his cruel friends laboured to trouble his spirit most, and muddy the stream of his former course and condition, by throwing their objections as so many stones into it, yet he could see this precious gem at the bottom, sparkling most brightly; yea, Hezekiah, in the very brim of the grave, recreates his spirit with it. Indeed, friends, this is a soul's encouragement, that it shall not want God's help in this search, if it goes about it with honest desires. A justice will not only give his warrant to search a suspicious house, but, if need be, will command others to be aiding to him in the business: word, ministers, spirit, all thou shalt have for thy assistance in this work; only have a care thou dost not mock God in the business; that soul deserves to be damned to this sin, who, in the search for hypocrisy, plays the hypocrite; like a naughty dishonest constable, that willingly overlooks him whom he searcheth for, and then says he cannot find him.

Now, for the fuller satisfaction in this point, and help in the trial; because it is that which both good and bad are mistaken in; the carnal wretch flattering himself his heart is good and honest; the sincere soul kept under fear of being a hypocrite; satan abusing them both: I shall therefore first lay down the grounds of an hypocrite, with which he props up his rotten house, and shew the falsities of them. Secondly, I will lay down the grounds of the weak Christian's fear for his being a hypocrite,

and

and the weakness of them. Thirdly, some positive discoveries of sincerity, which no hypocrite ever did, or can reach to.

SECT. II.—First, For the hypocrite, he will stand upon his defence; his heart is sincere. Well, how will he prove it?

1. The hypocrite will say, Sure I am no hypocrite, for I cannot endure it in another.

Ans. This is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite, except thou canst shew thou dost this from a holy ground. Jehu that asked Jehonadab whether his heart was right, carried at that same time a false one in his own breast. It is very ordinary for a man to decry that in another, and smartly to declaim against it, which he all the while harbours himself. How severe was Judah against Tamar! He commands in all haste to burn her, Gen. xxxviii. 24. Who would not have thought this man to be chaste? yet he was the very person that had defiled her. There may be a great cheat in this piece of zeal; sometimes the very place a man is in may carry him, as the *primum mobile* does the stars, in a motion which his own genius and liking would never lead him to. Thus many that are magistrates give the law to drunkards and swearers, merely to keep the decorum of their place, and shun the clamour that would arise from their neglect, who can possibly do both, when they meet with place and company fit for their purpose. Some, their zeal against another's sin is kindled at the disgrace which reflects upon them by it, in the eye of the world; and this falls out, when the sin is public, and the person that committed it stands related; this is conceived to be Judah's case, who was willing his daughter should be taken out of the way, that the blot which she had brought upon his family, might with her be out of sight. Some, again, find it a thriving trade, and make this advantage of inveighing against others faults, to hide their own the better, that they may carry on their own designs with less suspicion. Absalom asperseth his father's government, as a stirrup to help himself into the saddle. Jehu loved the crown more than he hated Jezabel's whoredoms, for all his loud cry against them. In a word (for it is impossible to hit all), there may be much of revenge in it, and the person is rather shot at than his sin; this was observed of Anthony's zeal against Augustus, *He hated the tyrant, but loved well enough the tyranny.*

2. Saith the hypocrite, I am bold, and fearless in dangers; sure I am no hypocrite. *Fearfulness surpriseth the hypocrite;* but it is *the righteous that is bold as a lion.*

Ans. The better way sure were to try thy boldness by thy sincerity, than to conclude thy sincerity by thy boldness. Truly, confidence, and a spirit undaunted at death and danger, are glorious things, when the spirit and word of Christ stand by to vouch

them, when the creature can give some account of the hope that is in him, as Paul, who shews how he came by it. This is Christian (not Roman) courage, Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4.: many rooms he passeth before he comes to this, which indeed joins upon heaven itself; faith is the key which lets him into all. First, it opens the door of justification, and lets him into a state of peace, and reconciliation with God, through Jesus Christ; *being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ*, ver. 1. Through this he passeth on to another, the presence-chamber of God's favour, and is admitted nigh unto him, as a traitor once pardoned is, *by whom also we have access by him unto this grace wherein we stand*, ver. 2. that is, we have not only our sins pardoned, and our persons reconciled to God by faith in Christ, but now under Christ's wing, we are brought to court, as it were, and stand in his grace, as favourites before their prince. This opens into a third, and *rejoice in the hope of glory*; we do not only at present enjoy the grace and favour of God, and communion with him here, but have from this a hope firmly planted in our hearts for heaven's glory hereafter. Now he is brought to the most inward room of all, which none can come at, but he that goes thro' all the former, ver. 3. *And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also.* If thou hast not entered at these doors, thou art a thief and a robber; thou gettest thy confidence too quickly to have it brought to thy hand by God; if God means thee well for eternity, he'll make thee smart for this thy boldness, as he did Jacob for stealing his father's blessing; and therefore content not thyself with a bare boldness and confidence in dangers, but inquire whether it hath a scripture bottom and basis to stand on, or whether the pillars supporting it be not ignorance in thy mind, and stupidity in thy conscience; if the latter, thou art in a sad condition; thy boldness will last no longer than thou seest it doth in one who is drunk, who, when he is wine-sprung, thinks (as they say) he can skip over the moon, and ventures to go without fear upon precipices and pit-falls; but, when sober, trembles to see what he did in his drunken fit. Nabal, that feared nothing when drunk, his heart died within him, and became as a stone, at the story Abigail told him in the morning, when the wine was gone out of him, 1 Sam. xxv. 37. Therefore as he, when his cause miscarried through the sleepiness of the judge on the bench, *appealed from the judge asleep to the judge awake*, so do I here with you, that through thy present stupidity of conscience art bold and fearless of death, and from this plead your uprightness. I appeal from your conscience asleep, to the sentence it will give when it shall be awake; which I wish may be in this world, that you may see your mistake, where you may amend it.

Thirdly, Sure, saith another, I am no hypocrite, for I perform

secret

secret duties in my closet; the hypocrite he is nobody, except on the stage; it is the brand of the hypocrite, he courts the world for its applause, and therefore does all abroad.

Ans. Though the total neglect of secret duties in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performing of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person; hypocrisy is in this like the frogs brought on Egypt, no place was free of them, no, not their bed-chambers; they crept into the most inward rooms, and so doth hypocrisy into closet-duties, as well as public; indeed, though the place be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets; like the hen who goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but, by her cackling, tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing. But where this is not, 'tis not enough; for we must not think but some hypocrites may and do spin a thread finer than others; in all arts there are some exceed others, and so in this trade of hypocrisy; the gross hypocrite, whose drift is to deceive others, his religion commonly is all without doors; but there is a hypocrite that labours to keep a fair quarter with himself, and is very desirous to make conscience on his side, which, to procure, he'll go to the utmost link of his chain, and do any thing that may not separate him and his beloved lusts; now secret prayer, and other duties, may be so performed, as that they shall not more prejudice a man's lusts than any other; 'tis not the sword, tho' very sharp, that kills, but the force that it is thrust withal; indeed there are some secret duties, as examination of our hearts, trying of our ways, and serious meditation of the threatenings of the word, against such sins as we find in our own bosoms, with close application of them to ourselves, would put sin hard to it; but the hypocrite can lay this sword so easily and fabourably on, that his lusts shall not cry, Oh! at it; therefore still there needs a fuller search before thou canst come off.

Fourthly, Sure I am not an hypocrite, for I do not only pray (and that in secret too) against my sins, but I also fight against them, yea, and that to good purpose; for I can shew you the spoils of my victories, that I have got over some of them. There was a time I could not go by the ale-house, but my lust bid me stand, and pulled me in; but now, I thank God, I have got such a mastery of my drunken lust, that I can pass by without looking in.

Ans. 'Tis good what thou dost say, and I wish all thy drunken neighbours could speak as much, that, when the magistrate will not, or cannot spoil that drunken trade, they that keep those shops for the devil, might even shut up their windows for want

of customers. But is it not pity, that what is good should be marred in the doing? yet 'tis too common, and may be thy case.

First, Let me ask thee, how long it hath been thus with thee? Lusts (as to the actings, I mean) are like agues, the fit is not always on, and yet the man not rid of his disease; and some men's lusts, like some agues, have not so quick returns as others. The river doth not move always one way, now 'tis coming, anon falling water; and though it doth not rise when it falls, yet it hath not lost its other motion. Now the tide of lust is up, and anon 'tis down, and the man recoils, and seems to run from it, but it returns again upon him. Who would have thought to have seen Pharaoh in his mad fit again, that should have been with him in his good mood, when he bid Moses and the people go? But alas, the man was not altered! Thus, may be, when a strong occasion comes, this (like an easterly wind to some of our ports) will bring in the tide of thy lust so strongly, that thy soul, that seemed as clear of thy lust as the naked sands are of water, will be in a few moments covered, and as deep under the waves as ever. But the longer the banks have held, the better; yet shouldst thou never more be drunk as to the outward fulfilling of the lust, this is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite.

Secondly, Therefore let me ask thee, What was the great motive to take thee off? That may be as bad (in some sense) which keeps thee from going to the ale-house now, as that which heretofore drew thee to it. 'Tis ordinary for one lust to spoil another's market; he that should save his money, from guzzling it down his throat, to lay on more finery on his back; what doth this man do but rob one lust to sacrifice it to another? Whether was it God or man, God or thy purse, God or thy pride, God or thy reputation, that knocked thee off? If any but God prevailed with thee, hypocrite is a name will better now become thee, than when in the ale-house. Again, if God, what apprehensions of God were they that did it? Some, the wrath of God, for some particular sin, hath so shaken (that as one scared with an apparition in a room, cares not for lying there any more), so they dare not, at least for a short time, be acquainted with that practice again: And as it is not the room, but the apparition, that one dislikes; so not the sin, but the wrath of God that haunts it, which the other flees from. In a word, may be thou hast laid down this sinful practice, but didst thou hate it, and love God, and so leave it? Thou art become strange to one, have you not got acquaintance with any other in the room of it. Thou hast laid down the commission of an evil, but hast thou taken up thy known duty? He is a bad husbandman that drains his ground, and then neither sows nor plants it: it is all one if it had been

been under water, as drained and not improved. What if thou cease to do evil (if it were possible), and thou learnest not to do well? 'Tis not thy fields being clear of weeds, but fruitful in corn, that pays thy rent, and brings thee in thy profit; nor thy not being drunk, unclean, or any other sin, but thy being holy, gracious, thy having faith unfeigned, pure love, and the other graces which will prove thee sound, and bring in evidence for thy interest in Christ, and through him of heaven.

CHAP. XI.

The Weak Grounds whereby tempted Souls argue against their own Uprightness.

WE proceed to the false grounds, from which sincere souls do many times go about to prove themselves hypocrites, yea, for a while conclude they are such.

First, Sure I am an hypocrite, saith the poor soul, or else I should not be as I am; God would not thus follow me on with one blow after another, and suffer satan to use me as he doth.—This was the grand battery Job's friends had against his sincerity; and sometimes satan so far prevails, as to make the sincere soul set it against his own breast, saying, much like him, *If God be with us, why is all this befallen us?* If God be in us by his grace, why appears he against us?

Ans. This fire into which God casts thee, proves thou hast dross; and if because thou art held long in the furnace, thou shouldst say thou hadst much dross, I would not oppose; but how thou shouldst spell hypocrite out of thy afflictions and troubles, I marvel: the wicked indeed make use of this argument to clap hypocrite on them; but the Christian, methinks, should not use it against himself. Though the barbarians presently gave their verdict, upon sight of the viper on Paul's hand, that he was a murderer, yet Paul thought no worse of himself for it. Christian, give but the same counsel to thyself, when in affliction and temptation, that thou usest to do to thy fellow brethren in the same condition, and thou wilt get out of the snare: Darest thou think thy neighbour an hypocrite, merely from the hand of God upon him? No, I warrant thee, thou rather pitiest him, and helpest him to answer the doubts that arise in his spirit from this very argument. It would make one smile to see how handsomely and roundly a Christian can untie the knots and scruples of another; who afterward, when brought into the like condition, is gravelled

with the same himself: He that helped his friend over the stile, is now unable to stride it himself; God so orders things, that we should need one another. She that is midwife to others, cannot well do that office to herself; nor he that is the messenger to bring peace to the spirit of another, able to speak it to his own. The case is clear, Christian; affliction cannot prove thee a hypocrite; which, wert thou without altogether, thou mightest safer think thou wert a bastard: The case, I say, is clear; but thy eyes are held for some further end God hath to bring about by thy affliction. But, may be, thou wilt say, It is not simply the affliction makes thee think thus of thyself; but because thou art so long afflicted, and in the dark also, as to any sense of God's love in thy soul. Thou hast no smiles from God's sweet countenance to alleviate thy affliction; and if all were right, and thou a sincere child of God, would thy heavenly Father let thee lie groaning, and never look in upon thee, to lighten thy affliction with his sweet presence? As to the first of these, the length of thy affliction, I know no standard God hath set for to measure the length of his saints' crosses by; and it becomes not us to make one ourselves; which we do, when we thus limit his chastisements to time, that if they exceed the day we have writ down in our thoughts (which is like to be short enough, if our hasty hearts may appoint), then we are hypocrites. For the other, thou must know, God can, without any impeachment to his love, hide it for a while; and truly he may take it very ill, that his children, who have security enough given them for his loving them (besides the sensible manifestation of it to their souls), should call this in question, for not coming to visit them, and taking them up in his arms when they would have him. In a word, may be thy affliction comes in the nature of purging physic, God intends to evacuate some corruption by it, which endangers thy spiritual health, and hinders thy thriving in godliness. Now the manifestation of his love, God may reserve (as the physicians do their cordials), to be given when the physic is over.

Secondly, I fear I am an hypocrite, saith the tempted soul; why else are there such decays and declensions to be found in me? 'tis the character of the upright, that he goes from strength to strength, but I go backward from strength to weakness.—Some Christians, they are like those that we call close men in the world; if they lose any thing in their trade, and all goes not as they would have it, we are sure to hear of that over and over again; they speak of their losses in every company; but when they make a good market, and gains come in apace, they keep this to themselves, not forward to speak of them. If Christians would be ingenuous, they should tell what they get, as what they lose.

lose. But to take it for granted, that thou dost find a decay, and direct our answer to it.

Ans. 1. I grant it as true, that the sincere soul grows stronger and stronger; but how? Even as the tree grows higher and bigger, which we know meets with a fall of the leaf, and winter, that for a while intermits its growth; thus the sincere soul may be put to a present stand by some temptation; as Peter, who was far from growing stronger when he fell from profession to denying, from denying Christ, to swearing and cursing if he knew him; yet as the tree, when spring comes, revives and gains more in the summer, than it loseth in the winter; so doth the sincere soul, as we see in Peter, whose grace, that squatted in for a while, come forth with such a force, that no cruelty from men could drive it in ever after; shaking temptations end in settlement, according to the apostle's prayer, 1 Pet. v. 10. *The God of all grace, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*

2. There is a great difference between the decay of a sincere soul, and of an hypocrite. The hypocrite declines out of an inward dislike of the ways of God: hence they are called *backsliders in heart*, Prov. xiv. 14. So long as they served his lust, and contributed to the obtaining his worldly interest, so long he had a seeming zeal; but that argument taken away, he begins to remit by degrees, till he comes to be key-cold, yea, as heartily sick of his profession as Ammon of Tamar. When the hypocrite begins to fall, he goes apace, like a stone down a hill, knows no ground but the bottom. Now speak freely, poor soul, darest thou say thou hast an inward dislike to the ways of God? May be thou dost pray, not with that heat and fervency which thou hast; but it is because thou dost not like the duty as formerly? Thou dost not hear the word with such joy, but dost thou not therefore hear it with more sorrow? In a word, canst thou not say, with the spouse, *When thou sleepest, thy heart waketh?* Cant. v. 2. that is, thou art not pleased with thy present declining state, but heartily wishest thou wert out of it; as one that hath a great desire to rise, and be at his work (his heart is awake), but he is not able at present to shake off that sleep which binds him down: this will clear thee from being a hypocrite.

Thirdly, I fear, saith the poor soul, I am a hypocrite, because I have such a divided heart in the duties I perform; I cannot for my life enjoy any privacy with God in duty, but some base lust will be crowding into my thoughts when I am at prayer, hearing of the word, or meditating; now I am lift up with a self-applauding thought, anon cast down to the earth with a worldly thought; what with one and another, little respite have I from such com-

pany. And do such vermin breed any where but in the dunghill of a false hypocritical heart?

Ans. Woe were it to the best of saints, if the mere rising and stirring of such thoughts as these (or worse than these) did prove the heart unsound; take heed thou concludest not thy state therefore from the presence of these in thee, but from the comportment and behaviour of thy heart towards them. Answer therefore to these few interrogatories, and possibly thou mayest see thy sincerity through the mist these have raised in the soul.

First, What friendly welcome have such thoughts with thee, when they present themselves to thee in duty? Are these the guests thou hast expected, and trimmed the room for? Didst thou go to duty to meet those friends, or do they unmannerly break in upon thee, and forcibly carry thee (as Christ foretold of Peter in another case) whither thou wouldst not? If so, why shouldst thou bring thy sincerity into dispute? Dost thou not know the devil is a bold intruder, and dares come where he knows there is none will bid him sit down? That soul alone he can call his own house, where he finds rest, Luke xii. 24. Suppose in your family, as you are kneeling down to prayer, a company of rioters should stand under your window, and all the while you are praying, they would be roaring and hollowing, this could not but much disturb you; but would you, from the disturbance they make, fall to question your sincerity in the duty? Truly 'tis all one, whether the disturbance be in the room or in the bosom, so the soul likes the one no more than he doth the other.

Secondly, Dost thou sit contented with this company, or use all the means thou canst to get rid of them, as soon as may be? Sincerity cannot sit still, to see such doings in the soul, but as a faithful servant, when thieves break into his master's house, though overpowered with their strength and multitude, that he cannot with his own hands thrust them out of doors, yet he will send out secretly for help, and raise the town upon them. Prayer is the sincere soul's messenger; it posts to heaven with full speed in this case, counting itself to be no other than in the belly of hell with Jonah, while it is yoked with such thoughts, and as glad when aid comes to rescue him out of their hands, as Lot was when Abraham recovered him from the kings that had carried him away prisoner.

Fourthly, But may be thou wilt say, though thou darest not deny that thy cry is sent to heaven against them, yet thou hearest no news of the prayer, but continuest still pestered with them as before, which increaseth thy fear that thy heart is naught, or else thy prayer would have been answered, and thou delivered from these inmates.

Ans. Paul might as well have said so, when he besought the Lord

Lord thrice, but could not have the thorn in his flesh plucked out, 2 Cor. xii. 8. He doth not by this shew thee to be an hypocrite, but gives thee a fair advantage of proving thyself sincere; not much unlike his dealing with the Israelites, before whom he did not (as they expected) hastily drive out the nations, but left them as thorns in their sides; and why? Hear the reason from God's own mouth, Judg. ii. 22. *That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not.* Thus God leaves these corruptions in thee, to prove whether thou wilt at last fall in and be friends with them, or maintain the conflict with them, and continue praying against them, by which perseverance thou wilt prove thyself to be upright indeed. A false heart will never do this. He is soon answered, that doth not cordially desire the thing he asks. The hypocrite, when he prays against his corruption, goes of his conscience's errand, not his will's; just as a servant, that doth not like the message his master sends him about, but dares not displease him, and therefore goes, and may be knocks at the man's door whither he is sent, yet very faintly, loth he should hear him; all that he doth is, that he may but bring a fair tale to his master, by saying he was there: even so prays the hypocrite, only to stop the mouth of his conscience with this flam, that he hath prayed against his lust; glad he is when 'tis over, and more glad when he returns *re infecta*. Observe therefore the behaviour of thy heart in prayer, and judge thyself sincere or not sincere by that, not by the present success it hath. God can take it kindly that thou askest what at present he thinks better to deny than to give. Thou wouldst have all thy corruptions knocked down at one blow, and thy heart in a posture to do the work of thy God, without any stop or rub from lust within, or devil without; wouldst thou not? God highly approves of your zeal, as he did of David's, who had a mind to build him a temple; but as he thought it not fit that the house should be reared in David's time (reserving it for the peaceful reign of Solomon), so neither doth he that this thy request should be granted in this life, having reserved this immunity as an especial part of the charter of the city that is above, which none but glorified saints, who are inhabitants there, enjoy: he hath indeed taught us to pray, *Let thy will be done on earth, as it is done in heaven;* but we must expect the full answer to it when we come there. Learn therefore, poor soul, to take this denial: David did not question the love and favour of God, because he would not let him build the house, neither did he desist preparing materials for it, but did what he might towards it, though he might not what he would. Far be it from thee also, that thou shouldst for this either cast away thy confidence on God, or lay aside thy endeavour

endeavour for God, in mortifying thy corruptions, and adding to the store thou hast at present of his graces, which (though now imperfect and unpolished) he will make use of in the heavenly building which he intends thee for, where all the proken pieces (as I may so say) of our weak graces shall be so improved by the power and wisdom of God, that they shall make up one glorious structure of perfect holiness, more to be admired by angels in heaven for the rare workmanship of it, than Solomon's temple was on earth by men, when in its full glory.

Fifthly, Oh but, saith the tempted soul, I have sometimes inward checks from my own conscience, that this duty I did hypocritically, and in that action there was much falseness of heart discovered itself; and if my heart condemn me, how can it be otherwise, but I must needs be an hypocrite?

Ans. I shall help to resolve this, by laying down two distinctions, and applying them to the case in hand.

First, We must distinguish between conscience proceeding by a right rule in its judgment, and conscience proceeding by a false rule.

Secondly, Between a conscience that goes by a right rule, and is also rightly informed how to use it; and a conscience that judgeth by a right rule, but is not rightly informed in its use. First, to apply the first.

1. Then conscience proceeds by a right rule, when it grounds its charge upon the word of God; for, being but an under officer, it is bound up to a law by which it must proceed; and that can be no other than what God appoints it, who gives it commission, and puts it in office; and that is the word of God, and that only; so that we are to give credit to our consciences, commanding or forbidding, condemning or acquitting us, when it can shew its warrant from the word of God for these; otherwise, as subjects that are wronged in an inferior court, and cannot have justice there, may appeal higher, so may and ought we from conscience to the word of God. And you must know conscience is a faculty that is corrupted as much as any other by nature, and is very often made use of by satan, to deceive both good and bad, godly and ungodly. Many that now their consciences (they say) speak peace to them, will be found merely cheated and gulled, when the books shall be opened; no such discharge will then be found entered in the book of the word, as conscience hath put it into their hand. And many gracious souls, who passed their days in a continual fear of their spiritual state, and were kept chained in the dark dungeon of a troublesome conscience, shall then be acquitted, and have their action against satan for false imprisonment, and accusing their consciences to the disturbing their peace.—And now let me ask thee, poor soul, who sayest, thy conscience checks

checks thee for a hypocrite; art thou a convicted hypocrite by the word? Doth thy conscience shew thee a word from Christ's law, that proves thee so? or rather, doth not satan abuse thy own fearfulness, and play upon the tenderness of thy spirit, which is so deeply possessed with the sense of thy sins, that thou art ready to believe any motion in thee, that tells any evil of thee? I am sure it is oft so; the fears and checks which some poor souls have in their bosoms, are like those reports that are now and then raised of some great news, by such as have a mind to abuse the country; a talk and murmur you shall have in every man's mouth of it; but go about to follow it to the spring-head, and you can find no ground of it, or author of credit that will vouch it.—Thus here, a brute there is in the tempted Christian's bosom, and a noise heard, as it were, continually whispering in his ears, *I am an hypocrite, my heart is naught;* all I do is dissembling; but when the poor creature in earnest sets upon the search, to find out the business, calls his soul to the bar, and falls to examine it upon those interrogatories, which the word propounds for trial of our sincerity, he can fasten this charge from none of them all upon himself; and at last comes to find it but a false alarm of hell, given out to put him to some trouble and affrightment for the present, though not hurt him in the end; like the politicians' lie, which, though it be found false at last, yet doth them some service the time it is believed for true. As one serious question, such as this, seriously put to a gross hypocrite, is able to make him speechless, What promise in all the Bible hast thou on thy side for thy salvation? so it is enough to deliver the troubled soul from his fears of being a hypocrite, if he would but, as David, ask his soul a scripture reason for his disquietments: *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me?* The sincere soul hath firm ground for his faith at bottom, however a little dirt is cast by satan over it, to make him afraid of venturing to set his foot on it.

Secondly, We must distinguish between a conscience rightly informed, and a conscience misinformed. A conscience may be regular, so as to choose the right rule, but not rightly informed how to use this rule in his particular case; indeed, in the saint's trouble of spirit, conscience is full of scripture sometimes, on which it grounds its verdict, but very ill interpreted: O, saith the poor soul, this place is against me, Psalm xxxii. *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.* Here, saith he, is a description of a sincere soul, to be one in whose spirit there is no guile; but I find much guile in me, therefore I am not the sincere one: Now this is a very weak, yea, false inference. By a spirit without guile, is not meant a person that hath not the least deceitfulness and

and hypocrisy remaining in his heart; this is such a one, as none since the fall (but Christ himself) was ever found walking in mortal flesh. To be without sin, and to be without guile, in this strict sense, are the same: A prerogative here on earth peculiar to the *Lord Christ*, 2 Pet. ii. 22. *who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* And therefore when we meet with the same phrase attributed to the saints, as to Levi, Malachi ii. 6. *Iniquity was not found in his lips;* and to Nathaniel, John i. 47. *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile;* we must sense it in an inferior way, that may suit with their imperfect state here below, and not put that which only was Christ's crown on earth, and is the glorified saints' robe in heaven, to wear on the weak Christian while militant on earth, not only with a devil without, but a body of sin within him. Wipe thine eyes again (poor soul), and then, if thou readest such places, wherein the spirit of God speaks so highly and hyperbolically of his saints' grace, thou shalt find he doth not assert the perfection of their grace, free from all mixture of sin; but rather to comfort poor drooping souls, and cross their misgiving hearts, which, from the presence of hypocrisy, are ready to overlook their sincerity as none at all, he expresseth his high esteem of their little grace, by speaking of it as if it were perfect, and their hypocrisy none at all. O Christian, thy God would have thee know that thou dost not more overlook thy little grace for fear of the hypocrisy thou findest mingled with it, than he doth thy great corruption, for the dear love he bears to the little yet true grace he sees amidst them. Abraham loved and owned his kinsman Lot, when a prisoner, carried away by those heathen kings; so does thy God thy grace, near in blood to him, when sadly yoked by the enemy in thy own bosom; and for thy comfort know, when the books shall be opened, the word, and also that of thy own conscience in the great day of Christ, Christ will be the interpreter of both; not the sense which thou hast in the distemper of thy troubled soul, when thou readest both with satan's gloss put upon them, shall stand; but what Christ shall say; and to be sure he hath already declared himself so great a friend to weak grace, when on earth, by his loving converse with his disciples, and free testimony he gave to his grace in them, when God knows they were but raw and weak Christians, both as to their knowledge and practice, that, poor soul, thou needest not fear he will then and there condemn what here he commended and so dearly embraced. Yea, he that took most care for his little lambs, how they might be used gently when he was to go from them to heaven, will not be unkind himself to them at his return, I warrant thee.

CHAP.

CHAP. XII.

Four Characters of Truth of Heart, or Sincerity.

HAVING broke the flattering glasses wherein hypocrites use to look, till they fall in love with their own painted faces, and conceit themselves sincere; as also those which disfigure the sweet countenance and natural beauty of the sincere soul, so as to make it bring the grace of God which shines on it into question; I now proceed to draw a few lineaments, and lay down some undoubted characters of this truth of heart, and godly sincerity, whereby we may have the better advantage of stating every one his own condition.

SECT. I.—First, A sincere heart is a new heart; hypocrisy is called the *old leaven*, 1 Cor. v. 7. *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.* Dough once soured with leaven will never lose the taste of it; neither will corrupt nature cease to be hypocritical, till it cease to be corrupt nature; either the heart must be made new, or it will have its old quality; there may be some art used to conceal it, and take away its unsavouriness from others for a while, as flowers and perfumes cast about a rotten carcase may do its scent; yet both the rotten carcase and the corrupt heart remain the same. They say of the peacock, that roast him as much as you will, yet his flesh, when cold, will be raw again; truly thus let a carnal heart do what it please, force upon itself ever such a high strain of seeming piety, so that it appears fire-hot with zeal, yet stay a little, and it will come to its old complexion, and discover itself to be but what it was, naught and false; one heart, and a new heart, both are covenant-mercies, yea, so promised, that the new is promised in order to the making of the heart one, Ezek. xi. 9. *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit in you, and I will take away the stony heart*, &c. God promiseth he will give them one spirit, that is, a sincere spirit to God and man: contrary to a divided heart, *a heart and a heart*, the mark of hypocrisy. But how will he give it? he tells them, *I will give you a new spirit*: And how will he do that? *I will take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh.* Upon which words one very well thus glosseth, I will give you *one heart*, which that I may so do, I will cast it *anew*; and that I may do this also, I will *melt and soften it*; as one that having many pieces of old silver or plate lying by him, which he intends to put into one bowl, he first resolves to cast it anew, and to that end throws it into the fire to melt, and so at last shuts up all in one piece.—Indeed by nature, man's heart is a very divided broken thing, scattered

scattered and parcelled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel); anon, when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another; thus divided is man and his affections; now, the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honour, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may, by his transforming spirit, cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures and his lusts, that shared him among them, now his heart is gathered unto God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that it doth; if therefore thou wouldst know, whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made new. Hath God thrown thee into his furnace? Did ever his word, like fire, take hold upon thee, so as to soften thy hard heart, and melt thy drossy spirit, that thou now seest that desperate hypocrisy, pride, unbelief, and the like, which before lay hid, like dross in the metal, before the fire finds it out? And not only seest it, but seest it sever and separate from thy soul, that thou who before didst bless thyself as in a good condition, now bewailest thy folly for it, heartily confessing what an unsavoury creature thou wert to God in all thou didst; the things which appeared so gaudy and fair in thy eye, thy civil righteousness, keeping the church, slubbering over a few duties in thy family, that for them thou thoughtest heaven was, as it were, in mortgage to thee: Dost thou lament to think how thou didst mock God with these hypocritical pageants abroad, while thy lusts were entertained within doors in thy bosom, there sucking the heart-blood of thy dearest affections? In a word, canst thou say that thou art not only melted into sorrow for these, but that thou findest thy heart, which was so divided and distracted betwixt lusts and creatures, now united, to fear the name of God? Hast thou but one design that above all thou pursuest, and that to approve thyself to God, though with the displeasing of all beside? One love, how thou mayest love Christ, and be beloved of him? If the streams of thy affections be thus, by the mighty power of God renewing thee, gathered into this one channel, and with a sweet violence run this way, then blessed art thou of the Lord; thou art the sincere soul in his account, though much corruption be found in thee still, that is soiling thy stream, and endeavouring to stop the free course of thy soul towards God; this may put thee to some trouble, as the mountains and rocks do the river water running to the sea, causing some windings and turnings in its course, which else would go the nearest way, even in a direct line to it; so thy remaining corruptions may now and then put thee out of thy way of obedience; but sincerity will, like the water

water on its journey, for all this, never leave till it bring thee, though with some compass, to thy God, whom thou hast so imprinted in thy heart, as he can never be forgot by thee. But if thou never hadst the hypocrisy of thy heart thus discovered, and made hateful to thee; nor a new principle put into thy bosom, to turn the tide of thy soul contrary to the natural fall of thy affections; only thou, from the good opinion which thou hast of thyself, because of some petty flourishes thou makest in profession, takest it for granted thou art sincere, and thy heart true; I dare pronounce thee an unclean hypocrite; the world may saint thee possibly, but thou wilt never, as thou art, be so in God's account; when thou hast dressed and spruced up thyself never so finely into the fashion of a Christian, still thou wilt have but a saint's face, and an hypocrite's heart. It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new shape; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in fining up an old suit, that will drop in a while to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?

SECT. II.—Secondly, A sincere heart is a plain heart, a simple heart, *sine plicis*, a heart without folds: the hypocrite is of the serpent's brood; he can, as the serpent, shrink up, or let out himself for his advantage, unwilling to expose himself much to the knowledge of others; and he has reason to do so, for he knows he hath most credit where he is least known: The hypocrite is one that *digs deep to hide his counsel*, Isa. xxix. 15. *Their heart is deep*, Psalm lxiv. 6. Their meaning and intent of heart lies no body knows how far distant from their words; a sincere heart is like a clear stream in a brook; you may see to the bottom of his plots in his words, and take the measure of his heart by his tongue. I have heard say, that diseases of the heart are seen in the spots of the tongue; but the hypocrite can shew a clear tongue, and yet have a foul heart; he that made that proverb, *speak that I may see you*, did not think of the hypocrite, who will speak that you shall not see him: The thickest clouds that he hath to wrap up his villainy in, are his religious tongue, and sandy profession. Wouldst thou know, whether thou hast a true heart in thy bosom? Look if thou hast a plain-dealing heart; see them joined, 2 Cor. i. 12. Paul, and the rest of the faithful messengers of Christ, had their conversation among the Corinthians *in simplicity and godly sincerity*. They had no close box in the cabinet of their hearts, in which they cunningly kept

kept any thing concealed from them of their designs, as the false apostles did. Now this plain-dealing of the sincere heart appears in these three particulars.

First, A sincere heart deals plainly with itself, and that in two things chiefly.

1. In searching and ransacking its own self; this it doth to its utmost skill and power. It will not be put off with pretences, or such a mannerly excuse as Rachel gave to Laban, when at the same time she sat brooding on his idols. No, an account it will have of the soul, and that such a one as may enable it to give a good account to God, upon whose warrant it does its office. O the fear which such a one shews, lest any lust should escape its eye, and lie hid, as Saul in the stuff, or that any the least grace of God should be trodden on regardlessly, by belying or denying it! When David found his thoughts of God, which used to re-create him, and be his most pleasing company, occasion some trouble in his spirit, Psalm lxxix. 3. *I thought on God, and was troubled;* this holy man, wondering what the matter should be, do but see what a privy search he makes; he hunts backwards and forwards, what God's former dealings had been, *and communes with his heart, and makes diligent search* there, ver. 6. never gives over till he brings it to an issue; and finding the disturber of his peace to be in himself, he is not so tender of his reputation, as to think of smoothing the business, or smoothing it over; but attaches the thief, indites his sin, and confesseth the fact, to the justifying of God, whom before he had hard thoughts of, ver. 20. *And I said, this is my infirmity.* As if he had said, Lord, now I see the Jonas that caused the storm in my bosom, and made me so uncomfortable in my affliction all this while; 'tis this unbelief of mine, that bowed me down to attend so to the sorrow and sense of my present affliction, that it would not suffer me to look up to former experiences: and so, while I forget them, I thought unworthily of thee; here was an honest plain-dealing soul indeed; what akin art thou, O man, to holy David? Is this thy way in searching of the soul? Dost thou do it in earnest, as if thou wert searching for a murderer hid in thy house, as willing to find out thy sin as ever a papist in Queen Mary's days was to find protestants, whom to discover they would run their swords and forks into beds and hay-mows, lest they should be there? Or when thou goest about this work, art thou loth to look too far, lest thou shouldst see what thou wouldst willingly overlook, or afraid to stay too long, lest conscience should make an unpleasing report to thee? Tertullian said of the heathen persecutors, they would not let the Christians be heard, because they could not then easily have had the face to condemn them, their cause would have appeared so just: the contrary here is

is true; the hypocrite dares not put his state upon a fair trial, because then he could not handsomely escape condemning himself. But the sincere soul is so zealous to know its true state, that when he hath done his utmost himself to find it out, and upon this privy search his conscience clears him, yet he contents not himself here, but jealous lest self-love might blind his eyes, and occasion too favourable a report from his conscience, he calls in help from heaven, and puts himself upon God's review, Psalm cxxxix. 21. *Do not I hate them that hate thee? and am I not grieved with those that rise up against thee?* ver. 22. his own conscience answers to it, *I hate them with a perfect hatred, I count them mine enemies.* Yet David, not wholly satisfied with his own single testimony, calls out to God, ver. 23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; see if there be any wicked way in me;* and wise physicians will not trust their own judgments about the state of their own health, nor sincere Christians themselves about their soul's welfare; 'tis God that they attend to; his judgment alone concludes and determines them; when they have prayed, and opened their case to him, with David, they listen what he will say; therefore you shall find them putting themselves under the most searching ministry, from which they never come more pleased, than when their consciences are stript naked, and their hearts exposed to their view, as the woman of Samaria, who commended the sermon, and Christ that preached it, for this, unto her neighbours, that *he had told her all that ever she had done*, John iv. 29. whereas a false heart likes not to hear on that ear; he thinks the preacher commits a trespass, when he comes upon his ground, and comes up close to his conscience; and if he could, he would have an action against him for it. This stuck in Herod's stomach, that John should lay his finger on his sore place; though he feared him, being conscious, yet he never loved him, and therefore was soon persuaded to cut off his head, which had so bold a tongue in it, that durst reprove his incestuous bed.

2. The sincere heart shews its plain dealing with itself, as in searching, so in judging itself, when once testimony comes in clear against it, and conscience tells: Soul, in this duty thou betrayest pride, in that affliction, frowardness, and impatience; such a one is not long before it proceeds to judgment; and this it doth with so much vehemency and severity, that it plainly appears, zeal for God, whom he hath dishonoured, makes him forget all self-pity; he lays about him in humbling and abasing himself, as the sons of Levi in executing justice on their brethren, who *knew not brother nor sister* in that act; truly such an heroic act is this of the sincere soul judging itself; he is so transported and clothed with a holy fury against his sin, that he is deaf to the cry

of flesh and blood, which would move him to think of a more favourable sentence. *I have sinned,* saith David, *against the Lord,* 2 Sam. xii.: in another place, *I have sinned greatly, and done very foolishly,* 2 Sam. xxiv.: in a third, he, as unworthy of a man's name, takes beast to himself, *so foolish was I and ignorant, as a beast before thee,* Psalm lxxiii. 22. But a false heart, if conscience checks him for this or that, and he perceives by this inward murmur in his bosom, which way the cause will go, if he proceeds fairly on to put himself upon the trial; the court is sure to be broke up, and all put off to another hearing, which is like to be at leisure; so that as witnesses, with delays and many put-offs, grow at last weary of the work, and will rather stay at home, than make their appearance to little purpose; so conscience ceaseth to give evidence where it cannot be heard, or when heard, can have no judgment against the offender.

Secondly, A true heart is plain, as with itself, so with God also; several ways this might appear; take one for all; and that is in his petitions and requests at the throne of grace; the hypocrite in prayer juggles, he asks what he would not thank God to give him; there is a mystery of iniquity in his praying against iniquity. Now this will appear in these two particulars, whether we be plain-hearted in our requests or not.

1. Observe whether thou beest deeply afflicted in spirit, when thy request is not answered, or regardest not what success it hath; suppose it be a sin thou prayest against, or some grace thou prayest for; what is thy temper all the while the messenger stays, especially if it be long? Thou prayest, and corruption abates not, grace grows not; now thy hypocrisy or sincerity will appear; if sincere, every moment will be an hour, every hour a day, a year, till thou hearest some news from heaven; hope deferred will make the heart sick; doth not the sick man that sends for a physician, think long for his coming? O he is afraid his messenger should miss of him, or that he will not come with him, or that he shall die before he brings his physic: a thousand fears disturb him, and make him passionately wish he were there; thus the sincere soul passeth those hours with a sad heart, that it lives without a return of its request; *I am a woman,* said Hannah to Eli, *of a sorrowful spirit,* 1 Sam. i. 15. and why so? Alas! she had from year to year prayed to God, and no answer was yet come: Thus saith the soul, I am one of a bitter spirit, I have prayed for a soft heart, a believing heart, many a day and month, but 'tis not come; I am afraid I was not sincere in the business; could my request so long have hung in the clouds else? Such a soul is full of fears and troubles; like a merchant that hath a rich ship at sea, who cannot sleep on land, till he sees her, or hears of her; but if, when thou hast sent up thy prayer, thou canst

canst cast off the care and thoughts of the business; as if praying were only like children's scribbling over pieces of paper, which, when they have done, they lay aside, and think no more of them; if thou canst take denials at God's hands for such things as these, and blank no more than a cold suitor doth, when he hears not from her whom he never really loved; it breaks not thy rest, imbitters not thy joy; a false heart set thee on work. And take heed, that, instead of answering thy prayer, God doth not answer the secret desire of thy heart; which should he do, thou art undone for ever.

2. Observe whether or not thou usest the means to obtain that which thou prayest God to give. A false heart sits still itself, while it sets God on work; like him, that when his cart was set in a slough, cried, Jupiter, help! but would not put his own shoulder to the wheel; if corruptions may be mortified, and killed for him, as Goliah was for the Israelites, he, like them, looking on, and not put to strike a stroke, so it is; but for any encounter with them, or putting himself to the trouble of using any means to obtain the victory, he is so eaten up with sloth and cowardice, that it is as grievous he thinks, as to sit still in slavery and bondage to them. But a sincere soul is conscientiously laborious. *Let us lift up our hearts with our hands unto the Lord*, Lam. iii. 41. that is, saith Bernard, *oremus & laboremus*. Let us pray and use the endeavour; the hypocrite's tongue wags, but the sincere soul's feet walk, and hands work.

3. The sincere soul discovers its plainness and simplicity to men. We had our conversation *among you*, saith Paul to the Corinthians, in *simplicity*, and godly *sincerity*, not in fleshly wisdom. The Christian is one that cannot subject his heart to his head, his conscience to his policy; he commits himself to God in well-doing, and fears not others, if he be not conscious to himself: and therefore he dares not make a hole in his conscience to keep his skin whole, but freely and openly avouches God without dissembling his profession: while the hypocrite shifts his sails, and puts forth such colours as his policy and worldly interest adviseth; if the coast be clear, and no danger at hand, he'll appear as religious as any; but no sooner he makes discovery of any hazard it may put him to, but he tacks about, and shapes another course, making no bones of juggling with God and man; he counts that his right road, which leads to his temporal safety; but quite contrary the upright, Prov. xvi. 17. *The high way of the upright is to depart from evil.* This is the road that this true traveller jogs on in; and if he be at any time seen out of it, 'tis upon no other account, than a man that hath unwillingly lost his way, never quiet till he strike into it again.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, The sincere true-hearted Christian is

uniform. As truth in the doctrine differs in this from its opposite, that it is one, error diverse; there is no harmony among errors, as among truths; so truth of heart, or sincerity, is known from hypocrisy by the same character. Indeed truth in the heart is but the copy and transcript of the other; they agree as the face in the glass doth with the face in the man that looks in it, or as the image in the wax with the sculpture in the seal from which it is derived: therefore if truth in the word be uniform and harmonious, then truth in the heart, which is nothing but the impression of that there, must also be so. A sincere Christian in the tenure of his course is, like himself, of one colour, not like your changeable stuffs, so dyed, that you may, by waving of them divers ways, see divers colours.

There is a threefold uniformity in the sincere Christian's obedience; he is uniform, as to the object, subject, and several circumstances that accompany his obedience.

First, As to the object, the hypocrite indeed is in with one duty, and out with another: like a globous body, he toucheth the law of God in one point, some particular command he seems zealous for, but meets not in the rest; whereas the sincere heart lies close to the whole law of God in his desire and endeavour. The *upright* man's foot is said to *stand in an even place*, Psal. xxvi. 11. he walks not haltingly and uncomely; as those who go in unequal ways, which are hobbling, and up, and down; or those whose feet and legs are not even; (as Solomon saith) *the legs of the lame are not even*, and so cannot stand in an even place, because one is long, and the other short; the sincere man's feet are even, and legs of a length, as I may say, his care alike conscientious to the whole will of God. The hypocrite, like the badger, hath one foot shorter than another; or like a foundered horse, he doth not stand, as we say, right of all-fours; one foot at least you shall perceive he favours, loth to put it down. The Pharisees pretended much zeal to the first table; they prayed and fasted in an extraordinary manner; but they prayed for their prey; and when they had fasted all day, they sup at the poor widow's cost, her house they mean to devour: A sad fast that ends in oppression, and only serves to get them a ravenous appetite, to swallow others estate, under a pretence of devotion. The moralist, he is very punctual in his dealings with men, but very thievish in his carriage to God; though he will not wrong his neighbour of a farthing, he sticks not to rob God of greater matters; his love, fear, faith, are due debts to God, but he makes no conscience of paying them. It is ordinary in scripture to describe a saint, a godly person, by a particular duty, a single grace; sometimes his character is, *one that feareth an oath*, Eccles. ix. 2.; sometimes one that loves his brethren, 1 John iii. 14.

14. and so of the rest; and why? but because wherever one duty is conscientiously performed, the heart stands ready for another. As God hath enacted all his commands with the same authority, wherefore 'tis said, *God spake all these words*, Exod. xx. 1. one as well as the other; so God infuseth all grace together, and writes not one particular law in the heart of his children, but the whole law, which is an universal principle, inclining the soul impartially to all; so that if thou likest not all, thou art sincere in none.

Secondly, The sincere Christian is uniform; the whole man, so far as renewed, moves one way; all the powers and faculties of the soul join forces, and have a sweet accord together; when the understanding makes discovery of a truth, then conscience improves her utmost authority on the will, commanding it in the name of God, whose officer it is, to entertain it; the will, so soon as conscience knocks, opens herself, and lets it in; the affections, like dutiful hand-maids, seeing it a guest welcome to the will, their mistress, express their readiness to wait on it as becomes them in their places. But in the hypocrite it is not so; there one faculty fights against another; never are they all found to conspire and meet in a friendly vote; when there is light in the understanding, the man knows this truth and that duty; then oft conscience is bribed for executing its office, it doth not so much as check him for the neglect of it: truth stands, as it were, before the soul, and conscience will not so much befriend it as to knock, and rouse up the soul to let it in; if conscience be overcome to plead its cause, and shews some activity in pressing for entertainment, it is sure either to have a churlish denial, with a frown for its pains, in being so busy to bring such an unwelcome guest with it, as the froward wife doth by her husband, when he brings home with him one she doth not like, or else a feigned entertainment, the more subtilely to hide the secret enmity it hath against it.

Thirdly, The sincere soul is uniform as to the circumstances of his obedience and holy walking; such as are time, place, and company, and manner; he is uniform as to time, his religion is not like a holiday suit, put on only at set times; but come to him when you will, you will find him clad alike, holy on the Lord's day, and holy on the week day too, Psalm cvi. 3. *Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times:* 'Tis a sign it is not a man's complexion, when the colour he hath while he sits by the fire dies away soon after. There are some, if you would see their goodness, and be acquainted with their godliness, you must hit the right time, or else you will find none, like some flowers that are seen but some months in the year, or like some physicians that they call fore-

noon men; they that would speak with them to any purpose must come in the morning, because commonly they are drunk in the afternoon; thus, may be, in the morning, you may take the hypocrite on his knees, in a saint's posture, but when that fit is over, you shall see little of God in all his course, till night brings him again of course to the like duty. The watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands all the day after; and so is that heart surely, that desires not always to keep in spiritual motion. I confess there may a great difference in the standing of two watches; one from the very watch itself, because it hath not the right make, and this will ever do so till altered; another possibly is true work, only some dust clogs the wheels, or a fall hath a little battered it; which removed, it will go well again.—And there is as great difference between the sincere soul and hypocrite in this case; the sincere soul may be interrupted in its spiritual motion and Christian course, but it is from some temptation that at present clogs him, but he hath a new nature which inclines to a constant motion in holiness, and doth, upon removing the present impediment, return to its natural exercise of godliness; but the hypocrite fails in the very constitution and frame of his spirit; he hath not a principle of grace in him to keep him moving.

Again, The sincere Christian is uniform, as to place and company: wherever he goes, he carries his rule with him, which squares him: within doors, amidst his nearest relations, David's resolve is his, Psalm ci. 2. *He will walk within his house with a perfect heart;* follow him abroad, he carries his conscience with him, and doth not bid it (as Abraham his servants, when ascending the mount) to stay behind till he comes back. The Romans had a law, that every one should, wherever he went, wear a badge of his trade in his hat, or outward vestment, that he might be known. The sincere Christian never willingly lays aside the badge of his holy profession. No place nor company turns him out of the way that is called holy. Indeed his conscience doth not make him forego his prudence; he knows how to distinguish of place and place, company and company; and therefore when cast among boisterous sinners, and scornful ones, he doth not betray religion to scorn, by throwing its pearls before such as would trample on them, and rent him; yet he is very careful, lest his prudence should put his uprightness to any hazard. *I will behave myself wisely* (saith David, in the forenamed Psalm), *in a perfect way;* that is, I will shew myself as wise as I can, so I may also be upright. Truly that place and company is like the Torrid Zone, uninhabitable to a gracious soul, where prophaneness is so hot, that sincerity cannot look out and shew itself, by seasonable counsel and reproof, with safety to the saint; and

and therefore they that have neither so much zeal to protest against the sins of such, nor so much care of themselves, as to withdraw from thence, where they can only receive evil, and do no good, have just cause to call their sincerity into question.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, The sincere Christian is progressive, never at his journey's end, till he gets to heaven; this keeps him always in motion, advancing in his desires and endeavours forward; he is thankful for little grace, but not content with great measures of grace: *When I awake* (saith David), *I shall be satisfied with thy likeness*, Psalm xvii. 15. He had many a sweet entertainment at the house of God in his ordinances: The spirit of God was the messenger that brought him many a covered dish from God's table, inward consolations which the world knew not of: Yet David has not enough, 'tis heaven alone that can give him the full draught. They say the Gauls, when they first tasted of the wines of Italy, were so taken with their lusciousness and sweetness, that they could not be content to trade thither for this wine, but resolved they would conquer the land where they grew. Thus the sincere soul thinks it not enough to receive a little now and then of grace and comfort from heaven, by trading and holding commerce at a distance with God in his ordinances here below, but projects and meditates a conquest of that holy land, and blessed place, from whence such rich commodities come, that he may drink the wine of that kingdom in that kingdom.—This raiseth the soul to high and noble enterprizes, how it may attain to further degrees of grace every day than other, and so climb nearer and nearer to heaven. He that aims at the sky, shoots higher than he that means only to hit a tree. *I press* (saith Paul) *toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 14. Others admired Paul's attainments. O that they had Paul's grace, and then they should be happy! but he would count himself very unhappy, if he might have no more; he professeth he hath not apprehended what he runs for; the prize stands not in the mid-way, but at the end of the race, and therefore he puts on with full speed, yea, makes it the trial of uprightness in all, ver. 15. *Let us therefore, as many as be perfect* (that is, sincere), *be thus minded.* 'Tis the hypocrite that stints himself in the things of God. A little knowledge he would have, that may help him to discourse of religion among the religious; and for more, he leaves it as more fitting for the preacher than himself. Some outward formalities he likes, and makes use of in profession, as attendance on public ordinances; and sins which would make him stink among his neighbours, he forbears; but as for pressing into more inward and nearer communion with God in ordinances, labouring to get his heart more spiritual, the whole body of sin more and more mor-

tified, this was never his design. Like some slighty tradesman, that never durst look so high as to think of being rich, but thinks it well enough, if he can but hold his shop doors open, and keep himself out of the jail, though with a thousand shifting tricks.

CHAP. XIII.

A Word of Direction to those who, upon Trial, are found Unsound and False-Hearted.

HAVING laid down the characters of the sincere heart, it will be necessary to make some improvement of them, as the report shall be that conscience makes in your bosoms, upon putting yourselves to the trial of your spiritual states by the same. Now the report that conscience makes, after examination of yourselves by those notes prefixed, will amount to one of these three inferences. Either it will condemn thee for a hypocrite, or pronounce thee a sincere Christian; or thirdly, bring thee in an ignoramus, and leave thee in doubt whether thou beest sincere or not. That I may therefore find thee, reader, at one door, if I miss thee at another, I shall speak severally to all three.

First, To such who upon the trial are cast; evidence comes in so clear and strong against them, that their conscience cannot but tell them plainly, if these be the marks of sincerity, then they are hypocrites. The improvement I would make of this trial for your sakes, is to give a word of counsel, what in this case you are to do, that you may become sincere.

1. Get thy heart deeply affected with thy present dismal state. No hope of cure till thou beest chased into some sense and feeling of thy deplored state. Physic cannot be given so long as the patient is asleep; and it is the nature of this disease to make the soul heavy-eyed, and dispose it to a kind of slumber of conscience, by reason of the flattering thoughts the hypocrite hath of himself, from some formalities he performs above others in religion, which fume up from his deceived heart (like so many pleasing vapours, from the stomach to the head), and bind up his spiritual senses into a kind of stupidity, yea, cause many pleasing dreams to entertain him with vain hopes and false joy, which vanish as soon as he wakes, and comes to himself. The Pharisees, the most notorious hypocrites of their age, how fast asleep were they in pride and carnal confidence, despising all the world in comparison of themselves, not afraid to commend themselves to

to God, yea, prefer themselves before others. *God, I thank thee, I am not like this Publican:* as if they would tell God, they did look to find some more respect from him than others (so far beneath them) had at his hand: Therefore Christ, in his dealing with this proud generation of men, useth an unusual strain of speech; his voice, which to others was still and soft, is heard like thunder breaking out of the clouds, when he speaks to them.— How many dreadful claps have we almost together in the same chapter fall on their heads, out of the mouth of our meek and sweet Saviour, Mat. xxiii. *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees!* No less than eight woes doth Christ discharge upon them, as so many case-shot together, that, by multiplying the woes, he might shew not only the certainty of the hypocrite's damnation, but precedency also; and yet how many of that rank do we read of to be awakened and converted by these sermons! Some few there were indeed, that the disease might appear not incurable; but very few, that we may tremble the more of falling into it, or letting it grow upon us. Peter learnt of his Master how to handle the hypocrite, who, having to do with one far gone in this disease, Simon Magus, Acts viii. 21. he steeps his words, as it were, in vinegar and gall: *Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.* There he lays the weight of his charge, that he carried a hypocritical heart in his bosom, which was a thousand times worse than his simonaical fact (though that foul enough); it was not barely that fact, but proceeding from a heart inwardly rotten and false (which God gave Peter an extraordinary spirit to discern), that proved him to be in *the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity;* only in this better than the damned souls in hell, they were in the fire, he in the bond of iniquity, like a faggot bound up, fit for it, but not cast in: they past hope, and he so much left as might amount to a *perhaps, if the thought of his heart might be forgiven.* To give but one instance more, and that is of a whole church, hypocritical Laodicea: the Spirit of God takes her up more sharply than all the rest, which, though he charged with some particular miscarriages, yet finds something among them he owns and commends; but in her, because she was conceited already (as this leaven of hypocrisy naturally puffs up), he mentions nothing that was good in her, lest it should feed that humour that did so abound already, and take away the smartness of the reproof, which was the only probable means left of recovering her. All that inclines to sleep is deadly to a lethargic; and all that is soothing, and cockering, dangerous to hypocrites. Some say, the surest way to cure a lethargy is to turn it into a fever; to be sure, the safest way to deal with hypocrites is to bring them from their false peace, to a deep sense of their true misery. Let this, then, be thy first work;

work; aggravate thy sin, and put thy soul into mourning for it. When a person was by the priest, who was to judge in case of leprosy, pronounced unclean, the leper thus convicted, *was to rend his clothes, go bare-headed, and put a covering upon his upper lip* (all ceremonies used by mourners), and to cry, *unclean, unclean*, Lev. xiii. 45. Thus do thou, as a true mourner, sit down, and lament this plague of thy heart; cry out bitterly, *unclean, unclean I am*, not fit by reason of thy hypocritical heart to come near God or his saints, but to be, like the leper, separate from both; if thou hadst such a loathsome disease reigning on thee, as did pollute the very seat thou sittest on, bed thou liest on, and drop such filthiness on every thing thou comest near, that should make all abandon thy nasty company, how great would thy sorrow be, as thou didst sit desolate and musing alone of thy doleful condition? Such a state thy hypocrisy puts thee into; a plague it is, more offensive to God than such a disease could make thee to men; it runs like a filthy sore through all the duties and goodly coverings that you can put over it, and defiles them and thee so, that God will take an offering out of the devil's hand as soon as out of thine, while thou continuest a hypocrite; and did the saints of God (with whom thou hast, may be, so much credit, as to be admitted to join with them at present) know thee, they would make as much haste from thee, as from him on whom they should see the plague-tokens; but should not thy disease be known till thou art dead, and so thou keep thy reputation with them, yea, possibly by them be thought, when thou diest, a saint; will this give thee any content in hell, that they are speaking well of thee on earth? *O poor Aristotle* (said one), *thou art praised where thou art not, and burnt where thou art!* He meant it was poor comfort to that great heathen philosopher to be admired by men of learning, that have kept up his fame from generation to generation, if he be all the while miserable in the other world: so here, O poor hypocrite, that art ranked among saints on earth, but punished among devils in hell.

Secondly, When thy heart is deeply affected with the sin and misery of thy hypocritical heart, thou must be convinced of thy insufficiency to make a cure of thyself. Hypocrisy is like a fistula sore: it may seem a little matter by the small orifice it hath, but it is therefore one of the hardest among wounds to be cured, because it is so hard to find the bottom of it. O take heed thy heart doth not put a cheat upon thyself. It will be very forward to promise it will lie no more, be false and hypocritical no more; but take counsel of a wise man, who bids thee not rely on what it saith: *He is a fool that trusts his own heart*, Prov. xxviii. 2. O how many die, because loth to be at pains and cost to go to a skilful physician at first! Take heed of self-resolutions, and self-reformations;

reformations; sin is like the *king's-evil;* God, not ourselves, can cure it. He that will be tinkering with his own heart, and not seek out to heaven for help, will in the end find, where he mends one hole, he makes two worse; where he reforms one sin, he will fall into the hands of many more dangerous.

Thirdly, Betake thyself to Christ as the physician, on whose skill and faithfulness thou wilt rely entirely for cure. If thou perish, resolve to perish at his door. But for thy comfort know, never any that he undertook miscarried under his hand, nor ever refused he to undertake the cure of any that came to him on such an errand. He blamed those hypocrites, John v. 40, 43. because they were ready to throw away their lives, by trusting an *empyric,* who should come in his own name, without any approbation or authority from God for the work, but *would not come to him that they might have life,* though he came in his Father's name, and had his seal and licence to practise his skill on poor souls for their recovery. And he that blamed those for not coming, will not, cannot be angry with thee who comest. It is his calling, and men do not use to thrust customers out, but invite them into their shops. When Christ was on earth, he gave this reason why he conversed so much with Publicans and sinners, and so little among the Pharisees, because there was more work for him, Mat. ix. 11, 12. Men set up where they think trade will be quickest. Christ came to be a physician to sick souls: the Pharisees were so well in their own conceit, that Christ saw he should have little to do among them, and so he applied himself to those who were more sensible of their sickness. If thou, poor soul, beest but come so far as to groan under thy cursed hypocrisy, and directest these thy groans in a prayer to heaven for Christ's help, thou shalt have thy physician soon with thee, never fear it. He hath not, since he asceuded, laid down his calling, but still follows his practice as close as ever; we find him sending his advice from heaven in that excellent receipt, Rev. iii. to Laodicea, what she should do for her recovery out of this very disease of hypocrisy. *I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed,* &c. as if he had said, Laodicea, thou tradest in false ware, deceiving thyself and others with appearances for realities, counterfeit graces for true; thy gold is dross, thy garments rotten rags, which do not hide, but discover thy shame; come to me, and thou shalt have that which is for thy turn, and better, cheap also; for though here is mention of buying, no more is meant than to come with a buyer's spirit, valuing Christ and his grace so high, that if they were to be bought, though with all the money in thy purse, yea, blood in thy veins, thou wouldst have them, and not

not go home, and say thou wert hardly used. 'Tis the thirsty soul that shall be satisfied; only look thy thirst be right and deep.

First, Right; a heart-thirst, and not simply a conscience-thirst. It is a very different heat that causeth the one and the other. Hell-fire may enflame the conscience, so as to make the thirsty sinner thirst for Christ's blood to quench the torment which the wrath of God hath kindled in his bosom. But it is heaven-fire, and only that which begets a kindly heat in the heart, that breaks out in longings of soul for Christ and his Spirit, with sweet cooling dews of grace to slack and extinguish the fire of lust and sin.

Again, Look it be deep. Physicians tell us of a thirst which comes from the dryness of the throat, and not any great inward heat of the stomach; and this thirst may be quenched with a gargle in the mouth, which is spit out again, and goes not down.—And truly there is something like this in many that sit under the preaching of the gospel. Some light touches are now and then found upon the spirits of men and women, occasioned by some spark that falls on their affections in hearing the word, whereby they on a sudden express some desires after Christ and his grace, that you would think they would in all haste for heaven; but being slighty flashes, and weak velleities, rather than strong volitions and deep desires, their heat is soon over, and thirst quenched with a little present sweetness they taste when they are hearing a sermon of Christ (which they spit out again as soon as they are gone home almost) as well as may be, though they never enjoy more of him. Labour therefore for such a deep sense of thy own wretchedness, by reason of thy hypocrisy, and of Christ's excellency by reason of that fulness of grace in him, which makes him able to cure thee of thy distemper; that as a man thoroughly athirst can be content with nothing but drink, and not a little of that neither, but a full satisfying draught whatever it costs him, so thou mayest not be bribed with any thing besides Christ and his sanctifying grace, nor with gifts, profession or pardon itself, if it could be severed from grace, no not with a little sparkling of grace, but long for whole floods, wherewith thou mayest be fully purged and freed of thy cursed lust which now so sadly oppresseth thee. This frame of spirit would put thee under the promise (heaven's security) that thou shalt not lose thy longing; if thou shouldst ask silver and gold, and seek any worldly enjoyment, at this rate thou mightst spend thy breath and pains in vain; God might let thee roar (like Dives in hell) in the midst of those flames which thy covetous heart hath kindled, without affording a drop of that to cool thy tongue, which thou so violently pantest after. But if Christ and his grace be the things thou wouldst have, yea, must

must have, truly then thou shalt have them, Matt. v. 6. *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

CHAP. XIV.

An Exhortation to those who upon Trial are found to be true in Heart, or sincere, to wear this Belt close girt to them in the daily Exercise of it; with Directions for that Purpose.

I Come to the second sort, such (I mean) whose consciences, upon diligent enquiry, give a fair testimony for their sincerity, that their hearts are true and upright. That which I have by way of counsel to leave with them, is to gird this belt which they have about them, close, in the exercise and daily practice of it.—Gird this belt, I say, close to thee; that is, be very careful to walk in the daily practice and exercise of thy uprightness. Think every morning thou art not dressed till this girdle be put on.—The proverb is true here, *ungirt unblest;* thou art no company for God that day, in which thou art not sincere. If Abraham will walk with God, he must be upright; and canst thou live a day without his company? Rachel paid dear for her mandrakes, to part with her husband for them; a worse bargain that soul makes, that to purchase some worldly advantage pawns its sincerity; which gone, God is sure to follow after. And as thou canst not walk with God, so not expect any blessing from God; the promises, like a box of precious ointment, are kept to be broke over the head of the upright, Mic. ii. 7. *Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?* And sure it is ill walking in that way, where there is found no word from God to bid us good speed; some are so superstitious, that if a hare crosseth them, they will turn back, and go no farther that day. But a bold man is he, that dares go on when the word of God lies cross his way. Where the word doth not bless, it curseth; where it promiseth not, it threatens: A soul in its uprightness, approving itself to God, is safe (like a traveller going about his lawful business betwixt sun and sun); if any harm or loss comes to such a soul, God will bear him out; the promise is on his side: by pleading it, he may recover his loss at God's hands, who stands bound to keep him harmless. See, to this purpose, Psal. lxxxiv. 11. But they are directions, not motives, I am in this place to give.

SECT. I.—First, Therefore, if thou wouldst walk in the exercise of thy sincerity, *walk in the view of God.* That of Luther is

is most true: All the commands are wrapt up in the first; for, saith he, all sin is a contempt of God; and so we cannot break any other commands but we break the first. *We think amiss of God, before we do amiss against God:* This God commended to Abraham, as of sovereign use to preserve his sincerity; *Walk before me, and be thou upright*, Gen. xvii. 1. This kept Moses's girdle straight and close to his loins, that he was neither bribed with the treasures of Egypt, nor brow-beaten out of his sincerity, with the anger of so great a king, Heb. xi. 27. *For he endured, as seeing him who was invisible.* He had a greater than Pharaoh in his eye, and this kept him right.

1. *Walk*, Christian, *in the view of God's omniscience;* this is a girding consideration; say to thy soul, Take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose (as the common phrase is) that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing; but did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, their discourse would be more loyal.—This made David so upright in his walking, Psal. cxix. 168. *I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee.* If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so, as to keep them in good order; what would it, for to set God looking on us in our eye? The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him, Mark xiv. 65. So does the hypocrite, he first saith in his heart, God sees not; or, at least, he forgets that he sees, and then makes bold to sin against him: Like that foolish bird, which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler, as if because she did not see him, therefore he could not see her. *I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine.* Thou mayest, poor creature, hide God by thy ignorance and atheism, so that thou shalt not see him, but thou canst not so as he shall not see thee. *All things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* O remember thou hast to do with God in all thou dost, whether thou art in shop or closet, church or market; and he will have to do with thee, for he sees thee round, and can tell from whence thou comest, when, like Gehazi before his master, thou enterest into his presence, and standest demurely before him in his worship, as if thou hadst been no where; then he can tell thee thy thoughts, and without any labour of pumping them out by thy confession, set them in order before thee; yea, thy thoughts that are gone from thee (like Nebuchadnezzar's dream from him), and thou hast forgot what they were at such a time, and at such a place, forty, fifty years ago, God hath them all in the light of his countenance, as atoms are in the beams of the sun; and he can, yea, will give thee a sight of them, that they shall walk in thy conscience, to thy horror, as John Baptist's ghost did in Herod's.

2. *Walk*

2. *Walk in the view of his providence* and care over thee; when God bids Abraham be upright, he strengthens his faith on him; *I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be perfect;* as if he had said, Act thou for me, and I will take care of thee: when once we begin to call his care in question towards us, then will our sincerity faulter in our walking before him; hypocrisy lies hid in distrust and jealousy as in its cause; if the soul dare not rely on God, it cannot be long true to God. Abraham was jealous of Abimelech, therefore he dissembled with him; thus do we with God; we doubt God's care, and then live by our wit, and carve for ourselves; *Up, make us gods,* say they, *we know not what is become of Moses.* The unbelieving Jews, flat against the command of God, kept manna for the morrow, Exod. xvi. 19. and why? but because they had not faith to trust him for another meal. This is the old weapon the devil hath ever used to beat the Christian out of his sincerity with. *Curse God, and die,* said he to Job, by his wife, Job ii. 9. As if she had said, What? wilt thou yet hold the castle of thy sincerity for God? Captains think they may yield, when no relief comes to them; and subjects make account, if the prince protect not them, they are not bound to serve him. Thou hast lain thus long in an afflicted state, besieged close with sorrows on every hand, and no news to this day comes from heaven of any care that God takes for thee; therefore *curse God and die:* Yea, Christ had him using the same engine to draw him off from his faithfulness to his father, when he bad him turn stones into bread. We see therefore of what importance it is to strengthen our faith on the care and providence of God for our provision and protection; which is the cause why God hath made such abundant provision, to shut all doubting and fear of this out of the hearts of his people.—The promises are so fitly placed, that as safe harbours, upon what coast soever we be sailing, or what condition soever we are in, if any storm arise at sea, or enemy chase us, we may put into some one or other of them, and be safe, though this one were enough, could we find no more to serve our turn, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. *The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in behalf of them* (or strongly to hold with them) *whose heart is perfect towards him:* God doth not set others to watch, but his own eyes keep centinel; now to watch with the child, like the own mother, there is the *immediacy of his providence;* we may say of sincere souls, what is said of Canaan, Deut. xi. 9, 10. *It is a land* (so they are a people) *the Lord himself careth for, his eyes are always on them.*—Again, *his eyes run to and fro:* there is the vigilance of his providence; no danger, no temptation finds him sleeping: but as a faithful watchman is ever walking up and down, so the eyes of God

God run to and fro. *He that keepeth Israel* (the sincere soul, which is the Israelite indeed) *shall neither slumber nor sleep*, Psalm cxxi. 4.; that is, not little nor much; not slumber by day, nor sleep by night: two words are there used, one that signifies the short sleep used in the heat of the day, the other for the more sound sleep of the night.

3. *Throughout the whole earth:* there is the *universality* and extent of God's care; 'tis an encompassing providence, it walks the rounds: not any one sincere soul left out of the line of his care. He has the number of them to a man, and all are alike cared for. We disfigure the beautiful face of God's providence, when we fancy him to have a cast of his eye, and care to one more than another.

4. *To shew himself strong in the behalf of them:* there is the *efficacy* of his care and providence; his eyes do not run to and fro to espy dangers, and only tell us what they are; as the centinel wakes the city when any enemy comes, but cannot defend it from their fury. A child may do this, yea, the geese did this for Rome's capitol. But God watcheth not to tell us our dangers, but to save us from them; the saints must needs be a happy people, *because a people saved by the Lord*, Deut. xxxiii. 29. God doth not only see with his eyes, but also fights with his eyes. He gave such a look to the Egyptians, as turned the sea on them to their destruction.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Labour to act from love, and not fear. Slavish fear and sincerity cannot agree; if one be on the increase, the other is in the wane always. See them opposed, 2 Tim. i. 7. *God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind*, that is, sincere; where he implies that fear is weak and impotent, easily scared from God, his truth, and service; and not so only, but unsound also; not trusting such a one with any great matter. The slave, though he works hard, because indeed he dares no other, yet is soon drawn into a conspiracy against his master, because he hates him while he fears him; we see this not only among the Turks (against whom those Christians used as absolute slaves by them in their galleys, do, when they have advantage in fight, often purchase their own liberty, by cutting the throats of their tyrant masters), but also in kingdoms, where subjects rather fear than love their princes, how ready they are to invite another into the throne, or welcome any that should court them; thus fast and loose will he be with God, that is pricked on with the sword's point of his wrath, and not drawn with the cords of his love. Israel is an example beyond parallel for this: *When God slew them, they sought after him; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongue; for their heart was not right with him,*

him, Psalm lxxviii. 34, 35. They feared God, and loved their lusts, and therefore they betrayed his glory at every turn into their hands; as Herod did John's head, whom he feared, into her hands whom he loved. And truly there is too much of this slavish fear to be found in the saints' bosoms, or else the whip should not be so often found in God's hand. We find God checking his people for this, and making their servile spirit the reason of his severity towards them. *Is Israel a servant, a home-born slave? Why is he spoiled?* Jer. ii. 14. As if God had said, What is the reason that I must use thee, who art my dear child, as coarsely as if thou wert a servant, a slave, laying on blow after blow upon thy back with such heavy judgments? Wouldst thou know? read ver. 17. *Hast thou not procured this to thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way?* Thou mayest thank thyself for this my unusual dealing with thee. If the child will forget his own ingenuity, and nothing but blows will work with him, then the father must deal with his child according to his servile spirit. When God led Israel by the way, as a father his child, lovingly, he flung from him; and if they would not lead by love, then no wonder he makes them drive by fear. O Christian, act more by love, and thou wilt save God's putting thee into fear with his whip; love will keep thee close and true to him. The very character of love is, *It seeks not her own*, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. And what is it to be sincere, but when the Christian seeks Christ's interest, and not his own? Jonathan loved David dearly, this made him incur his father's wrath, trample on the hopes of a kingdom, which he had for him and his posterity, rather than be false to his friend. Lot delivers up his daughters to the lust of the Sodomites, rather than his guests.—Sampson could not conceal that great secret from Dalilah whom he loved, wherein his strength lay, though it was as much as his life was worth to blab it to her. Love is the great conqueror of the world. Thus will thy soul, being inflamed with love to Christ, set thy worldly interest adrift, rather than put his honour to the least hazard. Abraham did not more willingly put his sacrificing knife to the ram's throat, to save his dear Isaac's life, than thou wilt be to sacrifice thy life to keep thy sincerity alive. Love is compared to fire, the nature of which is, to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them: It turns all into fire or ashes; nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of any thing in its bosom, that is derogatory to Christ; either it will reduce or abandon it, be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else; Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to jostle with her mistress, and the other jeer and mock at Isaac, he packs them both out of

doors: Love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with any thing against Christ, but take his part with him against any that oppose him, and so long thy sincerity is out of danger.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Meditate often on the simplicity and sincerity of God's heart to his saints. What more powerful consideration can be thought on, to make us true to God, than the faithfulness and truth of God to us? Absalom, though as vile a dissembler as lived, yet when Hushai came to him, he suspected him. 2 Sam. xvi. 17. *And Absalom said to Hushai, Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not out to thy friend?* His own conscience told him, it was horrible baseness for him that had found David such a true friend, now to join in rebellious arms against him; and though Absalom that said this, did offer great violence to this law of love, yet he questioned, it seems, whether any durst be so wicked besides himself? When therefore, Christian, thou findest thy heart warping into any insincere practice, lay it under this consideration, and if any thing of God and his grace be in thee, it will unbend thee, and bring thee to rights again. Ask thy soul, *Is this thy kindness to thy friend?* Such a friend as God hath been, is, and surely will be to thee for ever? God, when his people sin, to put them to the blush, asks them, Whether he gives them any cause for their unkind and undutiful carriage to him? *Thus saith the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?* Jer. ii. 5. So Moses intending to pay Israel home (before he goes up and dies on Nebo) for all their hypocrisy, murmuring, and horrible rebellions against God, all along from first setting out of Egypt to that day, he brings in their charge, and draws out the several indictments they were guilty of. Now to add the greater weight to every one, he, in the fore-front of all his speech, shews what a God he is that they have done all this against.

He makes way to the declaiming against their sins, by the proclaiming the glory of God against whom they were committed, Deut. xxxii. 3. *I will publish the name of God: ascribe ye greatness to our God;* and very observable it is, what of God's name he publisheth, the more to aggravate their sins, and help them to conceive of their heinous nature, ver. 4. *He is thy rock, his work is perfect; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he:* he chooseth to instance in the truth and sincerity of God's heart to them in all his dispensations, as that which might make them most ashamed of their doings. Now because this one consideration may be of such use to hedge in the heart, and keep it close to God in sincerity, I shall shew wherein the truth and sincerity of God's love appears to his saints, every one of which will furnish us with a strong argument to be sincere and upright with God.

1. The

1. The sincerity of God's heart appears in the principle he acts from, and end he aims at, in all his dispensations. Love is the principle he constantly acts from, and their good the end he propounds; from these he never swerves; the fire of love never goes out of his heart, nor their good out of his eye: when he frowns with his brow, chides with his lips, and strikes with his hand, even then his heart burns with love, and his thoughts meditate peace to them. Famous is that place for this purpose, Jer. xxiv. 5. *I will acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good, I will set mine eyes on them for good:* and this was one of the sharpest judgments that God ever brought upon his people, and yet in this he is designing mercy, and projecting how to do them good. So in the wilderness, when they cried out upon Moses for bringing them thither to kill them, they were more afraid than hurt; God wished them better than they dreamed of; his intent was *to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter end.* So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security; his own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation; he will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty, till he hath made up his intended thoughts of mercy to his people; he is pleased to prorogue the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world, till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory, on the same day, Psal. cii. 16. *When the Lord shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.* The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world; God is glorious when the world sees him not; but his declarative glory then appears, when the glory of his mercy, truth, and faithfulness, breaks forth in his people's salvation.—Now what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, who loves thee, yea all his children, so dearly, as to ship his own glory and your happiness in one bottom, that he cannot now lose the one, and save the other!

2. The truth and sincerity of God to his people, appears in the openness and plainness of his heart to them. A friend that is close and reserved, deservedly comes under a cloud in the thoughts of his friend; but he who carries, as it were, a window of chrystal in his breast, through which his friend may read what thoughts are writ in his very heart, delivers himself from the least suspicion of unfaithfulness. Truly thus open-hearted is God to his saints. *The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,* Psal. xxv. 14. He gives us his key, that will let us into his very heart,

and acquaint us what his thoughts are, yea were, towards us, before a stone was laid in the world's foundation, and this is no other than his Spirit, 1 Cor. iii. one *who knows the deep things of God:* for he was at the council-table in heaven, where all was transacted; this his Spirit he employed to put forth and publish in the scripture (indited by him) the substance of those counsels of love, which had passed between the Trinity of Persons, for our salvation; and that nothing may be wanting for our satisfaction, he hath appointed the same holy Spirit to abide in his saints, that as Christ in heaven presents our desires to him, so he may interpret his mind out of his word to us; which word answers the heart of God, as face answers face in the glass. There is nothing desirable in a true friend, as to this openness of heart, but God performs in a transcendent manner to his people. If any danger hangs over their heads, he cannot conceal it: *By them,* saith David, *is thy servant warned* (speaking of the word of God); one messenger or other God will send to give his saints the alarm, whether their danger be from sin within, or enemies without. Hezekiah was in danger of inward pride; God sends a temptation *to let him know what was in his heart,* that he might, by falling once, be kept from falling again. Satan had a project against Peter, Christ gives him notice of it, Luke xxii. If any of his children by sin displease him, he doth not (as false friends use) dissemble the displeasure he conceives, and carry it fair outwardly with them, while he keeps a secret grudge against them inwardly; no, he tells them roundly of it, and corrects them soundly for it, but entertains no ill-will against them; and when he leads his people to an afflicted state, he loves them so that he cannot leave them altogether in the dark, concerning the thoughts of love he hath to them in delivering them; but to comfort them in the prison, doth open his heart before hand to them, as we see in the greatest calamities that have befallen the Jewish church in Egypt and Babylon, as also the gospel-church under Antichrist. The promises for the deliverance out of all these were expressed before the sufferings came. When Christ was on earth, how free and open was he to his disciples, both in telling them what calamities should befall them, and the blessed issue of them all, when he should come again to them? And why? but to confirm them in the persuasion of the sincerity of his heart towards them, as those words import, John xiv. *If it were not so, I would have told you:* As if he had said, It would not have consisted with the sincere love I bear to you, to hide any thing that is fit for you to know from you, or make them otherwise than they are. And when he doth conceal any truths from them for the present, see his candour and sincerity, opening the reason of his veiling them to be, not that he grudged them the communication of them, but because

because they could not at present bear them. Now, Christian, improve all this, to make thee more plain-hearted with God. Is he so free and open to thee, and wilt thou be so reserved to him? Doth thy God unbosom his mind to thee, and wilt not thou pour out all thy soul to him? Darest thou not trust him with thy secrets, that makes thee privy to his counsels of love and mercy? In a word, darest thou for shame go about to harbour and hide from him any traitorous lust in thy soul, whose love will not suffer him to conceal any danger from thee? God, who is so exact and true to the law of friendship with his people, expects the like ingenuity from them.

Thirdly, The sincerity of God's heart and affection to his people appears in the immoveableness of his love. As there is no shadow of turning in the being of God, so not in the love of God to his people; there is no vertical point; his love stands still; like the sun in Gibeah, it goes not down, nor declines, but continues in its full strength, Isa. liv. 7. *With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord, thy Redeemer.*— Sorry man repents of his love; the hottest affection cools in his bosom; love in the creature is like fire on the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking and going out; but in God, like fire in the element, that never fails. In the creature, 'tis like water in a river, that falls and rises; but in God, like water in the sea, that is always full, and knows no ebbing or flowing. Nothing can take off his love where he hath placed it; it can neither be corrupted nor conquered; attempts are made both ways, but in vain.

1. His love cannot be corrupted. There have been such, that have dared to tempt God, and court, yea, bribe the holy one of Israel, to desert and come off from his people. Thus Balaam went to win God over to Balak's side against Israel; which to obtain, he spared no cost, but built altar after altar, and heaped sacrifice upon sacrifice; yea, what would they have not done to have gained but a word or two out of God's mouth against his people? But he kept true to them; yea, left a brand of his displeasure upon that nation for hiring Balaam, and sending him on such an errand to God, Deut. xxxiii. 4. This passage we find of God minding his people, to continue in them a persuasion of his sincere stedfast love to them, Micah vi. 5. *O my people, remember what Balak, king of Moab, consulted, and what Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him, from Shittim unto Gilgal:* And why should they remember this? *That they may know the righteousness of the Lord;* that is, that you may know how true and faithful a God I have been to you. Sometimes he makes use of it to provoke them to be sincere to him, as he in that proved himself to them, Josh. xxiv. 9. He tells them how Balak sent

Balaam to set God a-cursing them: *but*, saith the Lord, *I would not hearken to them*, but made him that came to curse you, with his own lips entail a blessing on you and yours; and why is this story mentioned? See ver. 14. *Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth:* A most natural and reasonable inference from the premises of God's truth and faithfulness. O Christian, wouldst thou have thy love to God made incorruptible, embalm it often in thy thoughts with the sweet spices of God's sincere love to thee, which is immortal, and cannot see corruption. Believe God is true to thee, and be false to him if thou darest. It is a solecism and barbarism in love, to return falseness for faithfulness.

2. The love of God to his saints cannot be conquered. That which puts it hardest to it, is not the power of his people's enemies (whether men or devils), but his people's sins. God makes nothing of their whole power and wrath, when combined together; but truly the sins of his people, these put omnipotency itself to the trial. We never hear God groaning under, or complaining of the power of his enemies, but often sadly of his people's sins and unkindnesses; these load him, these break his heart, and make him cry out, as if he were at a stand in his thoughts (to use a human expression), and found it not easy what to do, whether love or leave them, vote for their life or death: well, whatever expressions God useth, to make his people more deeply repent their unkindness shewn to him, yet God is not at a loss what to do in this case; his love determines his thoughts in favour of his covenant-people, when their carriage least deserves it, Hos. xi. 9. The devil thought he had enough against Joshua, when he could find some filth on his garment, to carry this in a tale, and tell God what a dirty case his child was in; he made just account to have set God against him, but he was mistaken; for, instead of provoking him to wrath, it moved him to pity; instead of falling out with him, he finds Christ praying for him, Zech. iii. Now improve this in a meditation, Christian. Is the love of God so unconquerable, that thy very sins cannot break or cut the knot of that covenant which ties thee to him? And does it not shame thee, that thou shouldst be so fast and loose with him? Thou shouldst labour to have the very image of thy heavenly Father's love more clearly stamped on the face of thy love to him. As nothing can conquer his love to thee, so neither let any thing prejudice thy love to him. Say to thy soul, Shall not I cleave close to God, when he hides his face from me, who hath not cast me off, when I have sinfully turned my back on him? Shall not I give testimony to his truth and name (though others desert the one, and reproach the other), who hath kept love burning in his heart to me, when I have been dishonouring him? What, God

yet

yet on my side, and gracious to me (after such backslidings as these), and shall I again grieve his spirit, and put his love to shame with more undutifulness? God forbid! This were to do my utmost to make God accessary to my sin, by making his love fuel for it.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, Beware of presumptuous sins; these give the deepest wound to uprightness, yea, are inconsistent with it, Psalm xix. 13. *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not have dominion over me, then shall I be upright.* One single act of presumption is inconsistent with the actual exercise of uprightness; as we see in David, who, by that one foul sin of murder, lost the present use of uprightness, and was in that particular too like one of the fools in Israel; and it therefore stands as the only exception to the general testimony which God gave unto his uprightness, 1 Kings xv. 5. *David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him, all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.* That is, there was no such presumption in any other sin committed by him, and therefore they are here discounted (as to this), that they did not make such a breach on his uprightness, as this one sin did. And as one act of a sin, presumptuous, is inconsistent with actual uprightness, so habitual uprightness is very hardly consistent with habitual presumption; if one act of a presumptuous sin, and, as I may so say, one sip of this poisonous cup, doth so sadly infect the spirit of a gracious person, and change his complexion, that he is not like himself, how deadly must it be to all uprightness, to drink from day to day of it? And therefore, as Daniel *purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the King's meat,* Dan. xviii. so do thou daily put thyself under some such holy bond, that thou wilt not defile thyself with any presumptuous sin; for indeed this is properly *the King's meat,* I mean the devil's, that prince of darkness, who can himself commit none but presumptuous sins, and chiefly labours to defile souls by eating of this his dish; say, as Austin in another case, I may err, but I am resolved not to be an heretic. I may have many failings, but, by the grace of God, I'll labour that I be not a presumptuous sinner; and if thou wouldst not be in a presumptuous sin, take heed thou makest not light of less infirmities. When David's heart smote him for rending the skirt of Saul, he stopt, and made a happy retreat; his tender conscience, giving him a privy check for rending his skirt, would not suffer him to cut his throat, and take away his life, which was better than raiment: But at another time, when his conscience was more heavy-eyed, and did not do this friendly office to him, but let him shoot his amorous glances at Bathsheba, without giving him any alarm of

his danger, the good man, like one whose senses are gone, and head dizzy at the first trip upon a steep hill, could not recover himself, but tumbled from one sin to another, till at last he fell into the deep pit of murder. When the river is frozen, a man will venture to walk and run where he durst not set his foot, if the ice were but melted or broke. O when the heart of a godly man himself is so hardened, that he can stand on an infirmity though ever so little, and his conscience not crack under him, how far may he go? I tremble to think what sin he may fall into.

SECT. V.—Fifthly, Get above the love and fear of the world. The Christian's sincerity is not eclipsed without the interposition of the earth betwixt God and his soul.

1. The love of the world, this is a fit root for hypocrisy to grow upon; if the heart be violently set upon any thing the world hath, and it comes to vote peremptorily for having it, I must be worth so much a year, have such honour; and the creature begins, with Ahab, to be sick with longing after them; then the man is in great danger to take the first ill counsel that satan or the flesh gives him for attaining his ends, though prejudicial to his uprightness. Hunters mind not the way they go in, over hedge and ditch they leap, so they may have the hare.

It is a wonder, I confess, that any saint should have so strong a scent after the creature, that hath the savour of Christ's ointments poured into his bosom. One would think the sweet perfume, which comes so hot from those beds of spices, the promises, should spoil the Christian's hunting-game after the creature, and one scent should hinder the taking in the other; the purer sweetnesses that breathe from Christ and heaven in them, should so fill the Christian's senses, that the other enjoyments, being of more gross and earthly savour, should leave no pleasing scent in his nostrils; which indeed is most true and certain so long as the Christian hath his spiritual senses open, and in exercise: But alas, as upon some cold in the body, the head is stopt, and the senses bound up from doing their office, so through the Christian's negligence, a spiritual distemper is easily got, whereby those senses (graces I mean) which should judge of things, are sadly obstructed, and now when the Christian is not in temper for enjoying those purer sweetnesses, the devil hath a fair advantage of starting some creature-enjoyment, and presenting it before the Christian, which the flesh soon scents, and carries the poor Christian after it, till grace comes a little to its temper, and then he gives over the chace with shame and sorrow.

3. Get above the fear of the world. The fear of man brings a snare. A coward will run into any hole, though ever so dishonourable, so he may save himself from what he fears; and when the

the holiest are under the power of this temptation, they are too like other men; Abraham, in a pang of fear, dissembles with Abimelech; yea, Peter, when not his life, but his reputation seemed to be in little danger, did not *walk uprightly according to the truth of the gospel;* he did not foot it right, as became so holy a man to do, but took one step forward, and another back again, as if he had not liked his way; now he will eat with the Gentiles, and anon he withdraws; now, what made him dissemble, and his feet thus double in his going? Nothing but a qualm of fear that came over his heart, as you may see, Gal. ii. 12. compared with ver. 14. *Fearing them which were of the circumcision,* dissembled, and drew others into a party with him.

SECT. IV.—Sixthly, and lastly, Keep a strict eye over thy own heart in thy daily walking; hypocrisy is a weed with which the best soil is so tainted, that it needs daily care and dressing to keep it under. He that rides on a stumbler, had need have his eye on the way, and hand on his bridle; such is thy heart, Christian, yea, it oft stumbles in the fairest way, when thou least fearest it; look to it therefore, and keep a strict rein over it; *above all keeping, keep thy heart,* Prov. iv. 23. The servant keeps his way when he travels in his master's company, but when sent of an errand alone, then he hath his vagaries; many a wry step may be prevented, and exteavagancy in thy daily walking, didst thou walk in company with thyself (I mean, observe thyself and way). In this sense, most in the world are beside themselves, strangers to their own walking, as much as to their own faces; every one that lives with them, knows them better than themselves, which is a horrible shame. And let not so vain an opinion find place with thee, that, because sincere, thou needest not have so strict an eye over thy heart; as if thy heart, which is gracious, could not play false with God and thee too; doth not Solomon brand him on the forehead for a fool, *that trusts his own heart?* If thou beest, as thou sayest, sincere, I cannot believe self-love should so far prevail with thee; they are the ignorant and prophane whose hearts are stark naught, that cry them up for good: But it is one part of the goodness of a heart made truly good by grace, to see more into, and complain more of its own naughtiness. Bring thy heart therefore often upon the review, and take its accounts solemnly; he takes the way to make his servant a thief, that doth not ask him now and then what money he hath in his hand. I read indeed of some in good Jehoiada's days that were trusted with the money for the repair of the temple, with whom they did not so much as reckon how they laid it out; *For they dealt faithfully,* 2 Kings xii. 15. but thou hadst not best to do so with thy heart, lest it set thee on score with God and thy own conscience, more than thou wilt get wiped

wiped out in haste. Many talents God puts into thy hand, health, liberty, Sabbaths, ordinances, communion of saints, and the like, for the repair of thy spiritual temple, the work of grace in thee; ask now thy soul, how every one of these are laid out; may be thou wilt find some of this money spent, and the work never a whit the more forward: It stands thee in hand to look to it, for God will have an account, though thou art favourable to thy deceitful heart to call for none.

CHAP. XV.

Counsel and Comfort to those who are Sincere but Drooping Doubting Souls; who neither are condemned absolutely in their Consciences for Hypocrites, nor fully absolved from the Suspicion of it in their own Thoughts.

WE have done with the second sort of persons; those who, upon search, find their consciences bearing witness for their uprightness.

Thirdly, There is a third sort remains yet to be spoken to, and they are doubting souls, who are indeed sincere, but dare not be persuaded to think so well of themselves. They come from the trial which they were desired to put themselves upon, and bring in an *ignoramus*, we know not whether we be sincere or no. Now to these I would give these words of counsel; and the Lord give his blessing with them!

SECT. I.—1. Take heed satan doth not draw you to conclude you are hypocrites, because you are without the present evidence of your sincerity. To say so, were to offend against the generations of God's dear children, many of whom must (if this were a true inference from such premises) pass the same sentence upon themselves; for such precious souls there are, from whose eyes the truth of their grace, and sincerity of their hearts, are at this day hid, and yet are not without either. The Patriarchs had their money all day bound up in their sacks as they travelled, though they did not know this, till they came to their inn, and opened them. Thus there is a treasure of sincerity hid in many a soul, but the time to open the sack, and let the soul know its riches, is not come. Many are now in heaven, have shot the gulph, and are safely landed there, who were sadly tossed with fears all along the voyage about the truth of grace in them; faith unfeigned puts a soul into the ark Christ; but it doth

doth not hinder but such a one may be sea-sick in the ship: 'tis Christ's work, not grace's, to evidence itself to our eye so demonstratively as to enable us to own it. Besides an organ fitly disposed, there is required a light to irradiate the *medium*; so besides the truth of grace, it is necessary there be the spirit, being another light, for want of which the soul is benighted in its thoughts, and must cry for another, and he no other than the Holy Spirit, to lead him into the light. This is the great messenger which alone is able *to shew a man his uprightness*; but as the eye may be a seeing eye in the dark, where it doth not see any thing, so there may be truth of grace, where there is not present sense of that truth; yea, the creature may be passionately hunting from ordinance to ordinance, to get that sincerity which it already hath; as sometimes you may have seen one seek very earnestly all about the house for his hat, when at the same time he hath it on his head; well, lay down this as a real truth in thy soul; I may be upright, though at present I am not able to see it clearly. This, though it will not bring in a full comfort, yet it may be some support till that come; as a shore to thy weak house, though it does not mend it, yet it will underprop and keep it standing till the master workman comes, the Holy Spirit, who, with one kind word to thy soul, is able to set thee right in thy own thoughts, and make thee stand strong on the promise, the only true basis and foundation of solid comfort. Be not more cruel to thy soul (O Christian) than thou wouldst to thy friend's (shall I say), yea, thine enemy's body; should one, thou didst not much love, lie sick in thy house, yea, so sick, that if you ask him whether he be alive, he could not tell you (his senses and speech being both at present gone), would you presently lay him out, and coffin him up for the grave, because you cannot have it from his own mouth that he is alive? Surely not. O how unreasonable and bloody then is satan, who would presently have thee put thyself into the pit-hole of despair, because thy grace is not so strong as to speak for itself at present.

SECT. II.—2. Let me send thee back for a better inquiry; look once again more narrowly, whether satan, that Joab, hath not the great hand in these questions and scruples started in thy bosom about thy sincerity, merely, as his last design upon thee, that he may amuse and distract thee with false fears, when thou wilt not be flattered with false hopes? The time was when thou wert really worse, and then by his means thou thoughtest thyself better than thou wert. And now since thou hast changed thy way, disowning thy former confidence, been acquainted with Christ, and got some savour of his holy ways in thy spirit, so as to make thee strongly breathe after him, thou art affrighted with many apparitions of fears in thy sad thoughts, if not charging thee

thee for an hypocrite, yet calling in question the truth of thy heart. 'Tis worth, I say, the inquiring, whether it be not the same hand again, the devil, though knocking at another door: no player hath so many dresses to come in upon the stage, as the devil hath forms of temptation, and this a suit which he very ordinarily hath been known to wear. If it were thy case only, thou mightest have some suspicion, lest these fears should be the just rebukes of thine own heart; but when thou findest many of thy fellow-brethren (whose sincerity thou darest not doubt, tho' thou savest not so much charity for thyself), their complaints so meet with thine, that no key (though made on purpose) can more fit all the wards of a lock, than their condition doth thine; this, I say, may well make thee set about another search, to find whether he be not come forth a lying spirit, to abuse thy tender spirit with such news, as he knows worse cannot come to thy ears, that thou dost not love Jesus Christ, as thou pretendest, and deceivest but thyself in thinking otherwise. Thus this foul spirit (like a brazen-faced whore that lays her child at an honest person's door) doth impudently charge many with that which they are little guilty of, knowing that so much will likely stick of his bold accusation, to the poor Christian's spirit, as shall keep the door open to let in another temptation which he much desires to convey into his bosom by the favour and under the shadow of this, and it is ordinarily this: to scare the Christian from duty, and knock off the wheels of his chariot, which used so often to carry him into the presence of God in his ordinances, merely upon a suspicion that he is not sincere in them, and better stay at home without hearing, or joining with God's people in any other duty, than go up and shew the naughtiness of thy heart, saith the devil. Had the serpent a smoother skin and a fairer tale when he made Eve put forth her hand to the forbidden fruit, than he comes with in this temptation, to persuade the poor Christian not to touch or taste of that fruit which God hath commanded to be eaten (ordinances, I mean, to be enjoyed by thee)? Yet, Christian, thou hast reason (if I mistake not) to bless God, if he suffers thine enemy so far to open his mind, by which thou mayest have some light to discover the wickedness of his design, in the other temptation of questioning thy sincerity. Dost thou not now perceive, poor soul, what made the loud cry of hypocrisy in thy ears? The devil did not like to see thee so busy with ordinances, nor thy acquaintance to grow so fast with God in them, and he knew no way but this to knock thee off. Bite at his other baits thou wouldst not; sin, though ever so well cooked and garnished, is not a dish for thy tooth, he sees, and therefore either he must affright thee from these by troubling thy imagination with fears of thy hypocrisy in them, or else he may throw his cap at thee,

and

and give thee over for one got out of his reach. Dost thou think, poor soul, that if thy heart were so false and hypocritical in thy duties, that he would make all this bustle about them? He doth not use to misplace his batteries thus, to mount them where there is no enemy to offend him; thy hypocritical prayers and hearing would hurt him no more, than if none at all. Neither doth he use to be so kind, as to tell hypocrites of the falseness of their hearts; this is the chain with which he hath them by the foot, and 'tis his great care to hide it from them, lest the rattling of it in their conscience awaken them to some endeavour to knock it off, and so make their escape out of his prison. Be therefore of good comfort, poor soul; if thy conscience brings not scripture-proof to condemn thee for an hypocrite, fear not the devil's charge; he shall not be on the bench when thou comest to be tried for thy life, nor his testimony of any value at that day.—Why then should his tongue be any slander to thee now?

SECT. III.—3. Neglect no means for the getting thy truth of heart and sincerity evidenced to thee; it is to be had. This is the *white stone with the new name on it, which no man knoweth but he that receives it*, promised, Rev. ii. 17. and I hope thou dost not think this to be an imaginary thing, as the Philosopher's stone is, which none could ever say, to this day, that he had it in his hand. Holy Paul had this white stone sparkling in his conscience more gloriously than all the precious stones in Aaron's breast-plate. 2 Cor. i. 12. *Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation in the world.* And Job surely was not without it, when he durst with such a confidence appeal to the thoughts that God himself had of him; even then when God was ransacking and searching every corner of his heart by his heavy hand, Job x. 7. *Thou knowest that I am not wicked:* Mark, he doth not deny that he had sin in him: that he confesses again and again; but that he was not wicked, *i. e.* a rotten-hearted hypocrite, this he will stand to, that God himself will not say so to him, though (for his trial) the Lord gives way to have him searched, to stop the devil's mouth, and shame him, who was not afraid to lay suspicion of this spiritual felony to his charge.

Object. But may be thou wilt say, these were saints of the highest form, and though they might come to see their sincerity, and have this *white stone* in their bosoms, yet such jewels cannot be expected to be worn by ordinary Christians.

Answ. For answer to this, consider that the weakest Christian in God's family hath the same witness in him that those had, 1 John v. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him.* Mark, 'tis indefinite, *every one that believeth:* not this eminent Christian, or that, but every one. *The witness*, the same

same Christ and Spirit dwell in thy heart, that do in the highest saint on earth; the same blood thou hast to sprinkle, and the same water to wash thee; these can, and will, when the Lord pleases, testify as much for thy grace and sincerity as it doth for theirs; only, as witnesses that are in a court, stay till the judge call them forth; then, and not till then, do they give their testimony; so do these, and God may and doth use his liberty, when he will do this. On the contrary, every wicked, impenitent sinner carries a witness in his own bosom that he will condemn him; but this doth not always speak, and presently make report of the sad news it hath to tell the sinner; that is when God calls a court, and keeps his private sessions in the sinner's soul, which is at his pleasure to appoint the time; only means must not be neglected, of which I shall propose a few.

1. Reach forth, Christian (for so I must call thee, whether thou wilt own the name or no), to further degrees of grace. The more the child grows up, the more it comes to its right complexion, and so doth grace. There is so much slavish fear, selfishness, with other imperfections, at present, like so much scurf on the face of this new-born babe of grace, that they do hide its true favour, which by degrees wear off as it grows up; yea, the spiritual reason of a Christian ripens, as the whole body of grace grows, whereby he is more capable, by reflecting on his own actions, to judge of the objections satan makes against his sincerity; so that, if you would not be always tossed to and fro with your own fluctuating thoughts, whether sincere or not, be not always children in grace, but grow up to higher stature, and thou wilt grow above many of thy fears; for, by the same light that thou findest the growth of thy grace, thou mayest see the truth of it also. Though it be hard in the *crepusculum*, or first break of day, to know whether it be day-light or night-light that shines, yet when you see the light evidently grow and unfold itself, you by that know it to be day. Paint doth not grow on the face fairer than it was, nor do the arms of a child in a picture get strength by standing there months and years. Does thy love, hope, humility, godly sorrow, grow more and more, poor soul, and yet dost thou question what it is, whether true grace or not? This is as marvellous a thing, that thou shouldst not know what thy grace is, and whence, as it was that the Jews should not know who Christ was, when he made a man born blind to see so clearly, John ix.

2. Readily embrace any call that God sends thee by his providence for giving a proof and experiment of thy sincerity. There are some few advantages that God gives, which if embraced and improved, a man may come to know more of his own heart, and the grace of God therein, than in all his life besides. Now these advantages

advantages do lie wrapt up in those seasons, wherein God more eminently calls us forth to deny ourselves for his sake. Be but ready to entertain, and faithful to obey that heavenly call, and thou wilt know much of thy heart. Partly, because grace in such acts comes forth with such glory, that, as the sun when it shines in a clear day, it exposeth itself more visibly to the eye of the creature; as also, because God chooseth such seasons as these for to give his testimony to the truth of his children's grace in, when they are most eminently exercising of it in this way. When does the master speak kindly to his servant, and commend him, but when he takes him most diligent in it? Then he saith, *Well done, good and faithful servant.* May be, sometimes or other, God is calling thee to such an act of self-denial, wherein (if thou wilt answer God's call) thou must trample upon some dear enjoyment or other, as credit, estate, may be a sweet child, a dear wife, yea, may be thou canst not do the work God calls thee to, but with hazard to them all, these and more too. Well, friend, be not sick to think of his great strength, or disquieted at the sight of his providence, that now stands at thy door; didst thou know what errand it comes about, thou wouldst invite it in, and make it as welcome as Abraham did the three angels whom he feasted in his tent so freely. I'll tell thee what God sends it for; and that is, to bring thee to a sight of thy sincerity, and acquaint thee with that grace of God in thee, whose face thou hast so long desired to see. This providence brings thee a chariot (to allude to Joseph's waggons sent for old Jacob) wherein thou mayest be carried to see that grace alive, whose funeral thou hast so long kept in thy mournful soul, and does not thy spirit revive at the thought of any means whereby thou mayest obtain this? Abraham, he was called to offer up his son, and went about it in earnest; such a piece of self-denial God could not pass without some mark of honour; and what is it he gives him, but his testimony to his uprighthess? Gen. xxii. 12. *Lay not thy hand upon the lad, for now I know thou fearest me, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thy only son, from me.* Why? God knew this before; yes, but he speaks it that Abraham may hear, and take it from God's mouth that he was sincere. May be thou art called to deny thy own education and principles sucked in by it; thy own company; cross the judgment of those thou highly esteemest; yea, thy own wisdom and reason, to entertain a truth, or to take up a practice merely upon the account of the word; which if thou canst do, and that without affectation of singularity, or an humour of pride blowing thee that way, 'tis an act of deep self-denial, and goes most cross to the most ingenious natures, who are afraid of drawing eyes after them, by leaving their company to walk in a path alone, yea, very loth to oppose their judgment to others,

more

more for number and parts than their own; in a word, who love peace so dearly, that they can be willing to pay any thing but a sin to purchase it; in these it must needs be great self-denial, and therefore such as have the greater ground to expect God's evidencing their sincerity to them. He did it to Nathaniel, who had all these bars to keep him from coming to Christ, and believing on him; yet he did both, and Christ welcomes him with a high and loud testimony to his uprightness: *Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile,* John i. 47. May be again, the thing God would have thee deny thyself in, is thy wrath and revenge, which to give thee a fair occasion to do with the greater demonstration of thy sincerity, he puts thine enemy into thy power, and lays him bound, as it were, under thy hand; yea, so orders it in his providence, that thou mayest have thy will on him with little noise; or if it be known, yet the notorious wrongs he hath done thee, and some circumstances in the providence that hath brought him into thy hand, concur to give thee an advantage of putting so handsome a colour upon the business, as shall apologize for thee in the thoughts of those that hear of it, making them especially, who look not narrowly into the matter, rather observe the justice of God on thine enemy's judgment befallen him, than thy injustice and sin, who wert the instrument to execute it. Now, when the way lies smooth and fair for thee to walk in, and thy own corruption calls thee forth, yea, useth God's name in the matter, to make thee more confident, saying to thee, as they to David, 1 Sam. xxiv. *Behold, the day is come, wherein God hath delivered the enemy into thy hand, that thou mayest do to him as seemeth good in thine eyes.* Now if thou canst withstand the temptation, and instead of avenging thyself upon the person, thy enemy, revenge thyself on thy revenge (the greater enemy of the two) by paying good into thy adversary's bosom for the evil he hath done thee; and when thou hast done this, canst escape another enemy in thy return, I mean pride, so as to come out of the field an humble conqueror, and consecrate the memorial of this victory, not to thy own, but praise of God's name (as Goliah's sword, which was not kept by David at his own home, to shew what he had done, but in the tabernacle, behind the ephod, as a memorial of what God had done by it in David's hand, 1 Sam. xxi. 9.); thou hast done that which speaks thee sincere, yea, high gratitude in this grace, and God will sooner or later let thee know so. David's fame sounds not louder for his victories got in the open field, over his slain enemies, than it doth for that he got in the cave, though an obscure hole, over his own revenge, in sparing the life of Saul, in which you have the case in hand every way fitted. By the renown of his bloody battles, he got *a great name, like unto the name*

name of the great men that are in the earth, 2 Sam. vii. 9.: but by this noble act of self-denial, he got a name, great, like unto the name of those that are famed for their holiness in the scripture; and rather than David shall not have the commendation of this piece of self-denial, God will send it to him in the mouth of his very enemy, who cannot hold (though by it he proclaims his own shame and wickedness), but he must justify him as a holy righteous man, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. *And he* (that is, Saul) *said unto David, Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil.*

3. Continue thou to wait upon God in all the ways of his ordinances, every one in their season; whenever thou comest to get the comfortable sight of thy sincerity, it is the spirit of God that must befriend thee in it, or else, like Hagar, thou mayest sit by the well, and not find it; thou mayest round thy field again and again, but not find the treasure hid in it. It is the spirit of God by which *we know the things that are freely given us of God*, 1 Cor. ii. 12. Now the Spirit sits in the ordinances, as a minister of state in his office, whither we must resort, if we will have the truth of our graces, that are our evidences for heaven, sealed to our consciences. Thither go therefore, yea, there wait; for thou knowest not, as the wise man saith of sowing seed, Eccles. xi. 6. whether thy waiting on this or that, now or then, shall prosper and be successful to thee for this end. It is enough to confirm, yea, quiet and comfort thee in thy attendance, that thou art at the right door, and though thou knockest long, and hearest no news of his coming, yet thou canst not stay so long, like Eglon's servants, Judg. iii. 25. that thou needest be ashamed. They indeed waited on a dead man, and might have stood long enough before he had heard them; but thou on a living God, that hears every knock thou givest at heaven-gate with thy prayers and tears; yea, a loving God, that all this while he acts the part of a stranger (like Joseph to his brethren), yet is so big with mercy, that he will at last fall on thy neck, and ease his heart, by owning of thee, and his grace in thee. Lift up thy head, then, poor drooping soul, and go with expectation of the thing; but remember thou settest not God the time: The sun riseth at its own hour, whatever time we see it. And when God shall meet thee in an ordinance, as sometimes, no doubt, Christian, thou findest a heavenly light irradiating, and influence quickening thy soul while hearing the word, or may be on thy knees wrestling with God, this is a sweet advantage and season thou shouldst improve for the satisfying thy soul; as when the sun breaks out, then we run to the dial to know how the day goes; or when, as we are sitting in the dark, one brings a candle into the room, then we bestir ourselves to look for the thing we miss,

and soon find what we in vain groped for in the dark; so mayest thou, poor soul, as many of thy dear brethren and sisters before thee have done, know more of thy spiritual state in a few moments at such a time, than in many a day when God withdraws; carefully therefore watch for such seasons, and improve them; but if God will hide thy treasure from thy sight, comfort thyself with this, God knows thy uprightness, though wrapped up from thine own eye; say, as David, Psal. cxlii. 2. *When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path.* And God will do with thee, not by the false accusations thou bringest in against thyself, as it is to be feared some have suffered at men's hands, but by the testimony which his all-seeing eye can give to thy grace.

CHAP. XVI.

Wherein the second Reason of the Metaphor is opened; why Sincerity is set out by the Soldier's Belt, viz. *from the establishing and strengthening Nature of this Grace, particularly of a preserving Strength it hath; with some special Seasons wherein the Hypocrite falls off.*

HAVING dispatched the first reason why sincerity is compared to the soldier's girdle or belt, and discoursed of this grace under that notion; we proceed to the second ground or reason of the metaphor, taken from the other use of the soldier's girdle, which is to strengthen his loins, and fasten his armour, over which it goes, close to him; whereby he is more able to march, and strong to fight. Girding, in scripture phrase, imports strength, Psal. xviii. 39. *Thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle,* Job xii. 21. *He weakeneth the strength of the mighty;* in the Hebrew it is, *he looseth their girdle;* to which use of the girdle, sincerity doth bear a fit analogy. It is a grace that establishes and strengthens the Christian in his whole course; as on the contrary, hypocrisy weakens and unsettles the heart; *a double minded man is unstable in all his ways.* As it is in bodies, so in souls. Earthly bodies, because mixt, are corruptible; whereas the heavenly bodies, being simple and unmixt, are not subject to corruption: So much a soul hath of heaven's purity and corruptibleness, as it hath of sincerity. *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,* with incorruption, Eph. vi. 24. The strength of every grace lies in the sincerity of it; so that without any more ado, the point which offers itself to our

our consideration, from this second notion of the girdle, is this:

Note, That sincerity doth not only cover all our other infirmities, but is excellent, yea, necessary to establish the soul in, and strengthen it for its whole Christian warfare. *The integrity of the upright shall guide them, but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them*, Prov. xi. 3. The hypocrite falls shamefully, and comes to naught with all his shifts and stratagems to save himself; whereas sincerity carries that soul safe, that dares follow its conduct, above all dangers, though in the midst of them. But to open the point; there is a threefold strength sincerity brings with it, which the false hypocritical heart wants. 1. A preserving strength. 2. A recovering strength. 3. A comforting strength.

First, Sincerity hath a preserving strength to keep the soul from the defilements of sin; when temptation comes on furiously, and chargeth the soul home, a false heart is put to the run, it cannot possibly stand; we are told of Israel's hypocrisy, Psal. lxxviii. 8. they were a generation that *set not their heart aright*, and what follows? *whose spirit was not stedfast with God*; stones that are not set right on the foundation, cannot stand strong or long: you may see more of this bitter fruit growing on the hypocrite's branches in the same Psalm, v. 56, 57. *They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow*; when the bow is unbent, the rift it hath made may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces; thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, drest like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shews herself an ape indeed; a false heart bewrays itself before 'tis aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps that soul pure in the face of temptation, Prov. x. 8. *He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely*; that is, he treads strong on the ground, like one whose feet are sound; though stones lie in his way, he goes over them safely; *but he that perverteth his way shall be known*, like one that hath some corn or other ail about his feet, though in green smooth way he may make shift to go, yet when he meets with hobbling stony way, he presently comes down, and faulters. Now that this preserving strength, which sincerity girds the soul with, may better appear, it will be requisite to instance in some of those seasons wherein sincerity keeps the soul from the power of temptation; as on the contrary, when hypocrisy cowardly and tamely yields the soul up into its hands.

1. A false heart usually starts aside, and yields to sin, when it can hide itself in a crowd, and have store of company, under which it may shroud itself. The hypocrite sets his watch, not

by the sun (the word I mean), but by the town-clock; what most do, that he'll be easily persuaded to do; the voice of the multitude is with him the voice of God: therefore you seldom have him swim against the tide of corrupt times; light things are carried by the stream, and light spirits by the multitude. But the sincere Christian is massy and weighty; he'll sooner sink to the bottom, and yield to the fury of a multitude by suffering from them, than float after their example in sinning with them. The hypocrite hath no inward principle to act him, and therefore like the dead fish, must drive with the current; but sincerity, being a principle of divine life, directs the soul to its way, and improves it to walk in it, without the help of company to lean on, yea, against any opposition it meets. Joshua spake what was in his heart, when ten or twelve that were sent with him, perceiving on which side the wind lay, accommodated themselves to the humour of the people, Numb. xiv. 7. The false prophet's pleasing words, with which they clawed Ahab's proud humour, could by no means be brought to fit good Micaiah's mouth, though he should make himself very ridiculous by choosing to stand alone, rather than fall in with so goodly a company, *four hundred prophets*, who were all agreed of their verdict, 1 Kings xx.

Secondly, A false heart yields, when sin comes with a bribe in its hand; none but Christ, and such as know the truth as it is in Jesus, can scorn the devil's offering; *All these will I give unto thee.* The hypocrite, let him be got pinnacle-high in his profession, yet will make haste down to his prey, if it lies fair before him; one that carries not his reward in his bosom, that counts it not portion enough to have God and enjoy him, may be bought and sold by any huckster, to betray the soul, God, and all.—The hypocrite when he seems most devout, waits but for a better market, and then he'll play the merchant with his profession; there is no more difference betwixt a hypocrite and an apostate, than betwixt a green apple and a ripe one; come a while hence, and you will see him fall rotten ripe from his profession. Judas a close hypocrite, how soon an open traitor! And as fruit ripens sooner or later, as the heat of the year proves, so doth hypocrisy, as the temptation is strong or weak; some hypocrites go longer before they are discovered, than others; because they meet not with such powerful temptations to draw out their corruptions. It is observed, that the fruits of the earth ripen more in a week, when the sun is in conjunction with the dog-star, than in a month before; when the hypocrite hath a door opened by which he may enter into possession of that worldly prize he hath been projecting to obtain, now his lust within, and the occasion without, are in conjunction, and his day hastens wherein he will fall. The hook is baited, and he cannot but nibble

ble at it. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this hour of temptation. David prays, Psal. xxvi. 9. that God would *not gather his soul with sinners, whose right hand is full of bribes;* such as, for advantage, would be bribed to sin, to which wicked gang he opposeth himself, ver. 11. *But as for me, I will walk in my integrity:* where he tells us, what kept him from being corrupted and enticed, as they were from God, it was his integrity; a soul walking in its integrity, will take bribes neither from men, nor sin itself; and therefore he saith, ver. 12. *His foot stood in an even place*; or, as some read it, *My foot standeth in righteousness.*

Thirdly, The hypocrite yields to the temptation, when he may sin without being controuled by man, which falls out in a double case. First, when he may embrace his lust in a secret corner, where the eye of man is not privy to it. Secondly, when the greatness of his place and power lifts him above the stroke of justice from man's hand: in both these he discovers his baseness; but sincerity preserves the soul in both.

1. See how the hypocrite behaves himself, when he thinks he is safe from man's sight. Ananias and Saphira's care was to blind man's eye, by laying some of their estates at the apostles' feet, and having made sure of this (as they thought), by drawing this curtain of their seeming zeal between it and them, they pocket up the rest without trembling at, or thinking of God's revenging eye looking on them all the while; and boldly, when they have done this, present themselves to Peter, as if they were as good saints as any in the company. The hypocrite stands more to the saving of his credit in this world, than the saving of his soul in the other; and therefore when he can ensure that, he'll not stick to venture the putting of the other to hazard; which shews he is either a flat atheist, and doth not believe there is another world to save or damn his soul in; or on purpose stands aloof from the thoughts of it, knowing it is such a melancholy subject, and inconsistent with the way he is in, that he dares not suffer his own conscience to tell him what it thinks of it; and so it comes to pass, that it hath no power to awe and sway him, because it cannot be heard to speak for itself. Now sincerity preserves the soul in this case; it was not enough that Joseph's master was abroad, so long as his God was present. *How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 8. Mark, not against his master, but *against God.* Sincerity makes faithful to man, but for more than man's sake: Joseph served his master with eye-service; he had God in his eye, when Potiphar had not him in his: Happy are those masters that have any that will serve them with this eye-service of sincerity.

2. The hypocrite, if he cannot get out of man's sight, yet may he but stand out of the reach of his arm and power, it is as well

for his turn, and doth often discover him. How unworthily and cruelly dealt Laban with Jacob, cheating him in his wife, oppressing him in his wages, by changing it ten times: Alas, he knew Jacob was a poor shiftless creature, in a strange place, unable to contest with him, a great man in his country. Some princes, who, before they have come to their power and greatness, have seemed humble and courteous, kind and merciful, just and upright; as soon as they have leaped into the saddle, got the reins of government into their hand, and begun to know what their power was, have even rid their subjects off their legs with oppression and cruelty, without all mercy to their estates, liberties, and lives; such instances the history of the world doth sadly abound with: even Nero himself, that played the part of a devil at last, began so, that in the Roman hopes he was hugged for a state-saint. Set but hypocrisy upon the stage of power and greatness, and it will not be long before its mask falls off. The prophet meant this much when he made only this reply to Hazael's seeming abhorrency of what he had foretold concerning him, 2 Kings viii. 13. *The Lord shewed me that thou shalt be king over Syria;* as if he had said, Hazael, thou never yet didst sit in a king's chair, and knowest not what a discovery that will make of thy deceitful heart. Mark from whence Rehoboam's revolt from God is dated, 2 Chron. xii. 1. *It came to pass when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the Lord.* Policy bade him conceal his intentions, till he had settled himself in his throne, lest he should have hazarded his crown; but that set on sure, and his party made strong, now all breaks out; like a false captain who victuals his castle, and furnishes it with all kind of ammunition, and then, and not till then, declares himself a traitor, when he thinks he is able to defend his treason. But here also sincerity preserves the gracious soul: two famous instances we have for this, one in Joseph, who had his unnatural brethren, that would once have taken away his life, yea, who did that which might have proved worse, for all that they knew (barbarously sell him as a slave into a strange land); these he had strangely brought into his hands, while he was in all his honour and power in Egypt; and now when he might have paid them in their own coin, without any fear or controul from man, behold this holy man is lift above all thoughts of revenge; he pays their cruelty in his own tears, not in their blood; he weeps over them for joy to see them, that once had no joy till they had rid their hands of him; yea, when their own guilt made them afraid of his presence, measuring him by their own revengeful hearts, how soon doth he deliver them from all fears of any evil intended by him against them? Yea, he will not allow them to darken the joy, which that day had with them

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brought to him, so much as by expressing their own grief before him, for their own cruelty; so perfect a conquest had he got of all revenge, Gen. xlv. 5. And what preserved him in his hour of great temptation? He told them, Gen. xlii. 18. *This do, and live; for I fear God;* as if he had said, Though you be here my prisoners, at my will and mercy, for all that you can do to resist, yet I have that which binds my hands and hearts too, from doing or thinking you evil, *I fear God.* This was his preservative, he sincerely feared God. The other instance is Nehemiah, governor of that colony of the Jews, which, under the favour of the Persian princes, were again planting their native country. By his place, he had an advantage of oppressing his brethren, if he durst have been so wicked, and from those that had before him been honoured with that office, he had examples of such as could not only swallow the common allowance of the governor, without rising in their consciences (which shewed a digestion strong enough, considering the peeled state of the Jews at that time), but could, when themselves had sucked the milk, let their cruel servants suck the blood of this poor people also, by illegal exactions; so that had Nehemiah, coming after such oppressors, taken his allowance, but eased them of the other burdens which they groaned under, no doubt he might have passed for merciful in their thoughts; but he durst not go so far. A man may possibly be an oppressor in exacting his own. Nehemiah knew they were not in case to pay, and therefore he durst not require it. But as one who comes after a bad husbandman that had exhausted his land, and sucked out the heart of it, casts it up fallow for a time till it recovers its strength, so did Nehemiah spare this oppressed people; and what, I pray, was it that preserved him from doing as the rest had done? See Nehem. v. 15. *But I did so, because of the fear of the Lord.* The man was honest, his heart touched with a sincere fear of God, and this kept him right.

CHAP. XVII.

Of a Recovering Strength that Sincerity hath, and whence.

SECONDLY, Sincerity hath a recovering strength with it; when it doth not privilege from falling, yet it helps up again; whereas the hypocrite lies where he falls, and perishes where he lies; he is therefore said *to fall into mischief*, Prov. xxiv. 16. The sincere soul falls, as a traveller may do, by stumbling at some

stone in his path, but gets up, and goes on his way with more care and speed; the other falls, as a man from the top of a mast, that is ingulphed, past all recovering, in the devouring sea. He falls as Haman did before Mordecai; when he begins, he stays not, but falls till he can fall no lower. This we see in Saul, whose heart was never right; when once his naughty heart discovered itself, he tumbled down the hill apace, and stopt not, but from one sin went to a worse; and in a few years you see how far he was got from his first stage, where he first took his leave of God. He that should have told Saul, when he betrayed his distrust and unbelief, in not staying the full time for Samuel's coming (which was the first wry step taken notice of in his apostacy), that he, who now was so hot for the worship of God, that he could not stay for the prophet's coming, would, ere long, quite give it over, yea, fall from inquiring of the Lord, to ask counsel of the devil, by seeking to a witch, and, from seeking counsel of the devil, should, at the last and worst act of this bloody tragedy, with his own hands throw himself desperately into the devil's mouth by self-murder, surely would not have been believed. Saul would have stranged at it more than Hazael did at the plain character Elisha gave of him to his face. And truly all the account we can give of it, is, that his heart was naught at first, which Samuel upon that occasion hinted to him, 1 Sam. xiii. when he told him, *the Lord sought him a man after his own heart;* David he meant, who afterwards fell into a sin greater, as to the matter of fact, than that for which Saul was rejected of God, but yet having an habitual sincerity, as the *root of the matter in him*, happily recovered out of it; for want of which, hypocritical Saul miscarried finally; so true is that proverb, that *frost and fraud have dirty ends.* Now there is a double reason for recovering strength of sincerity; one taken from the nature of sincerity itself; the other from the promise by God settled on the soul where sincerity is found.

First, From the nature of sincerity itself; sincerity is to the soul, as the soul is to the body: it is a spark of divine life kindled in the bosom of the creature by the Spirit of God. It is *the seed of God remaining* in the saint, 1 John iii. 9. Now as the seed cast into the womb of the earth, and quickened there by the influence of heaven upon it, doth put forth its head fresh and green in the spring, after many a cold nip it hath had from the winter, so doth sincere grace after temptations and falls, when God looks out upon it with the beams of his exciting grace; but the hypocrite, wanting this inward principle of life, doth not so; he is a Christian by art, not by a new nature, drest up like a puppet, in the fashion and outward shape of a man, that moves by the strings which the workman fastens to it, and not informed by

a soul of its own; and therefore as such an image, when worn by time, or broken by violence, can do nothing to renew itself, but crumbles away by piece-meal, till it comes at last to nothing, so doth the hypocrite waste in his profession, without a vital principle to oppose his ruin that is coming upon him. There is great difference between the wool on the sheep's back, which shorn, will grow again, and the wool of the sheep's skin on a wolf's back; clip that, and you shall see no more grow in its room. The sincere Christian is the sheep, the hypocrite is the wolf clad in the sheep's skin; the application of it is obvious.

Secondly, The sincere soul is under a promise, and promises are restorative, Psalm xix. 7. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul,* (in Hebrew) *restoring the soul.* It fetcheth back the soul to life, as a strong cordial one in a fainting fit, which virtue is proper to the promissory part of the word, and therefore so to be taken in this place. Now the sincere soul is the only right heir of the promises. Many sweet promises are laid in for the assuring succour and auxiliary aid to bring them off in all their dangers and temptations, Prov. xxviii. 18. *Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved.* Now mark the opposition, *But he that is perverse shall fall at once;* that is, suddenly, irrecoverably, Job viii. 20. *God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers;* he will not take them by the hand, Heb. that is, to help them when they fall; nay, the hypocrite is not only destitute of a promise for his help, but lies also under a curse from God. Great pains we find him take to rear his house, and when he hath done, *leans on it, but it shall not stand; he holds it fast, but it shall not endure,* Job viii. 15. *A little that the righteous hath, is better than the riches of many wicked,* Psalm xxxvii. 16. But why? See the reason, ver. 17, 18. *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholdeth the righteous.* The righteous man, in that Psalm, is the upright; by the wicked is meant the hypocrite. A little true grace, mixed with much corruption in the sincere Christian, is better than the hypocrite's riches, great faith, zeal, and devotion, he brags so of. The former hath the blessing of the promise, to recover it when decaying; these the curse of God threatening to blast them, when in their greatest pomp and glory. The hypocrite's doom is to grow *worse and worse,* 2 Tim. ii. 13. Those very ordinances which are effectual, through the blessing of the promise, to recover the sincere soul, being cursed to the hypocrite, give him his bane and ruin. The word, which opens the eyes of the one, puts out the eyes of the other; as we find in the hypocritical Jews, to whom the word was sent to *make them blind,* Isa. vi. 9, 10. It melts and breaks the sincere soul, as in Josiah, 2 Kings xxii. 19. but meeting with a naughty false heart,

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it hardens exceedingly; as appeared in the same same Jews, Jer. xlii. 20. before the sermon they speak fair, *Whatever God saith, they will do;* but when sermon is done, they are further off than ever from complying with the command of God. The hypocrite he hears for the worse, prays for the worse, fasts for the worse; every ordinance is a wide door, to let satan in more fully to possess him, as Judas found the sop.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of a Supporting and Comforting Property Sincerity hath, shewn in several Particular Instances.

THIRDLY, Sincerity hath a supporting, comforting virtue; it lifts the head above water, and makes the Christian float a-top of the waves of all troubles, with a holy presence, and gallantry of spirit, Psalm xi. 24. *Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness;* not only light after darkness, when the night is past, but in *darkness* also; *out of the eater comes meat, and out of the strong, sweetness.* Those afflictions which feed on, yea, eat out the hypocrite's heart, the sincere soul can feed on them, suck sweetness from them; yea, hath such a digestion, that he can turn them into high nourishment both to his grace and comfort. A naughty heart is merry only while his carnal cheer is before him, Hosea ii. 11. God tells Israel, *he will take away her feasts, and all her mirth shall cease;* her joy is taken away with the cloth; sincerity makes the Christian sing, when he hath nothing to his supper. David was in none of the best case when in the cave, yet we never find him merrier; his heart makes sweeter music than ever his harp did, Psalm lvii. 7. *My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise;* the hypocrite's joy, like the strings of musical instruments, crack in wet weather; but sincerity keeps the soul in tune in all weathers: They are unsound bodies that sympathize with the season, chearly in fair, but ill and full of aches in foul; so the unsound heart, a few pinching providences set him going, kill him as a sharp winter doth weak bodies; whereas the sincere soul never is more hale, never more comfortable; afflictions do him but this courtesy, to call in his affections, which in the summer of prosperity were possibly too much diffused and scattered among creature-delights, and unite them more entirely and closely upon Christ, into whose bosom it goes as directly when storms come, as the bee to its hive; and he must needs be comfortable that hath

hath so soft a pillow to lay his head on as Christ's lap; sincerity keeps the soul's mouth open, to receive the sweet consolations that drop from word and spirit; indeed all the promises are directed to such. But hypocrisy is like the quincy in the throat of the sick man, he burns within, and can get nothing down to quench the fire which his sins have kindled in his soul. Conscience tells him, when sweet promises are offered, these are not for me, I have dealt falsely with God and man; it is the sincere soul God invites, but I am a rotten-hearted hypocrite: And how much short comes such a poor wretch of Dives's misery in hell, I pray? Dives burns, and hath not a drop to quench his tongue, the hypocrite in affliction he burns too, and hath indeed not a drop, but a river, a fountain full of water, yea, of blood presented to him, but he cannot drink it down, he cannot make any use of it for his good; his teeth are set so close, no key can open them, his hypocrisy stares him in the face, it lies like a mastiff at his door, and will suffer no comfort to come near him; and which is worse, he that hath no bread, or he that hath and cannot eat it? none so witty and cunning as the hypocrite in prosperity to ward off the reproofs, to shift from the counsels of the word; and in affliction, when conscience awakes, none so skilful to dispute against the comforts of the word. Now he is God's close prisoner, no comfort can come at him; if God speak terror, who can speak peace? Lam. iii. 65. *Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them;* sorrow of heart is the hypocrite's curse from God in affliction, and what God lays on, sticks close. The word for *sorrow*, in the Hebrew, signifies a shield that fenceth, and covers over, and doth, saith one upon this place, denote the disease physicians call *Cardiaca passio*, which so oppresseth the heart, that it covers it *sicut scuto*, as with a shield or lid over it, and keeps all relief from the heart; such is the sorrow of the hypocrite in affliction, when once his conscience awakes, and God fills him with amazing thoughts of his own sins, and God's wrath pursuing him for them. But I shall descend to instance in a few particular kinds of afflictions, and shew what comfort attends sincerity in them all.

SECT. I.—First, Sincerity supports and comforts the soul under reproaches from men. These are no petty trials: they are reckoned among the saints martyrdoms, Heb. xi. 36. called there *cruel mockings;* yea, not unworthy to be recorded among the sufferings of Christ; the matchless patience and magnanimity of his spirit, appeared not only in enduring the cross, but in despising the shame, which the foul tongues of his bloody enemies loaded him unmercifully with; man's aspiring mind can least brook shame; credit and applause is the great idol of men that stand at the upper end of the world for parts or place; give but this, and what

what will not men do or suffer? One wiser than the rest, could see this proud humour in Diogenes, that endured to stand naked, embracing a heap of snow, while he had spectators about him to admire his patience, as they thought it, and therefore was asked, *Whether he would do thus, if he had none to see him?* The hypocrite is the greatest credit-monger in the world, 'tis all he lives on almost, what the breath of men's praise sends him in; when that fails, his heart faints; but when it turns to scorn and reproaches, then he dies, and needs must, because he has no credit with God, while he is scorned by man; whereas sincerity bears up the soul against the wind of man's vain breath, because it hath conscience, and God himself, to be his compurgator, to whom he dare appeal from man's bar. O how sweetly do a good conscience, and the spirit of God witnessing with it, feast the Christian at such a time! and no matter for the hail of man's reproaches that rattle without, while the Christian is so merry within doors. David is a pregnant instance for this, Psalm xli. 11. *By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me;* how David! does not thy enemy triumph over thee? I pray see the condition he at present was in; he had fallen into a great sin, and the hand of God was in him, in a disease, chastising him for it, as appears, ver. 4. his enemies from this take advantage to speak him all to naught; ver. 5. *Mine enemies speak evil of me*; no doubt, charging him for an hypocrite; when they come to visit him, it is but to gather some matter of reproach, which they presently blab abroad, ver. 6. yea, they are not ashamed to say, ver. 8. that an evil disease, or as it is in the Hebrew, *a thing of Belial* (that is his sin) *cleaveth to him;* now God hath met with him, now he lieth, he shall rise no more; yea, his familiar friend, in whom he trusted, serves him as ill as the worst of his enemies, ver. 9. was ever poor man lower? and yet he can say his enemy triumphs not over him? his meaning therefore we must take thus; that notwithstanding all these reproaches cast upon him, yet his spirit did not fail, this was above them all; God kept that up, and gave him such an inward comfort, as wiped off their scorn as fast as they threw it on; their reproaches fell, as sometimes we see now, melting as fast as they fell, none lay upon the spirit to load and trouble it. And how came David by this holy magnanimity of spirit, these inward comforts? ver. 12. he tells us, *As for me, thou upholdest me in my integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.* As if he had said, thou doest not by me, O Lord, as mine enemies do; they pick out my worst, and revile me for it; if there be but one sore place, one sinful part of my life, like flies, they light there; but thou overlookest my sinful slips and failings, pardoning them, and takest notice of my uprightness, which, amidst all my infirmities,

mities, thou upholdest, and so settest me before thy face, communicating thy love and favour to me, notwithstanding the sins that are found mingled with my course of obedience; this kept up the holy man's spirit, and makes him end the Psalm joyfully, ver. 13. *Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting.* We live, Christians, in reproaching times; he that is so over dainty of his name, that he cannot bear to see some dirt, and that good store too, cast upon his back by reviling tongues, must seek a path to travel in by himself to heaven; but, for thy comfort, Christian, sincerity, though it cannot privilege thee from travellers' fare, and keep thee from being dashed with calumnies, yet it will do thee this kind office, that the dirt which lights on thy coat shall not soak into thy soul to damp thy joy, and chill thy inward comfort. Reproaches without may be comfortably endured, yea triumphantly worn as a crown, if they meet not with a reproaching conscience within. Yea, sincerity will do more than this comes to, it will not only comfort thee under the *persecution of the tongue, but hand also;* not only quench the fire, which from thence is spit on thy face, by tongues set on fire by hell; but it will comfort thee in the very mouth of fire itself, if God shall suffer thee by persecutors to be cast into it; sincerity makes thee indeed fearful to sin; O, thou darest not touch one of these coals; but it will make thee bold to burn, and even hug joyfully the flames of martyrdom when called to them. So little afraid was that sincere servant of Christ, an Italian martyr, Mr. Fox records, among many other undaunted champions of the truth, that when the magistrate of the place where he was to be burned, and the officers of the Bishop that condemned him, were in a hot contest, wrangling which of them should pay for the wood that should make the fire for his burning; he presently sent to desire them, *They would not fall out upon that occasion, for he would take off the burden from them both, and be at the cost himself.* Blessed soul! he made not so much ado of spending his blood and sacrificing his life, as they about a few pence wickedly to procure the same.

SECT. II.—Secondly, Sincerity girds the soul with comforting strength, when conflicting with affliction from the hand of God. Many are the sorts of affliction with which God exerciseth his sincere servants; to name a few:

First, When the Lord toucheth his outward man, by sickness; or his inward man, by spiritual conflicts; sincerity is a comfortable companion in both. The hypocrite, above all, fears falling into God's hands, and well he may, for he is able to do him most hurt; therefore no sooner God takes hold of his collar, either of these ways, but his joy gives up the ghost; he, like some murderer, whose doom is writ plain in the law, gives himself up for a dead

dead man, when once he is clapt in prison. This made Job such a wonderling to his wife, because he held up his holy course, when battered so sadly by the afflicting hand of God, with renewed afflictions; *Dost thou yet hold thy integrity?* What, nothing but blows from God's hand, and yet continue to bless him? this was strange to her, but not to him, who could call her *foolish woman* for her pains; but not charge God foolishly, for all he smarted so under his hand: Sincerity enables the Christian to do two things in this case, which the hypocrite cannot. To speak good of God, and to expect good from God; and the soul cannot be uncomfortable, though head and heart ache together, which is able to do these.

First, Sincerity enables the Christian to think and speak well of God. A false-hearted hypocrite, his countenance falls, and his heart rises, yea, swells with venom against God, though he dare not always let it drive out of his mouth, yet he has bloody thoughts against him in his heart. Hast thou found me, O my enemy? saith the wretch; he loves not God, and therefore a good thought of God cannot dwell in his soul; all that God has done for him, though never so bountifully, 'tis forgotten, and imbittered with the overflowing of his gall at the present dealings of God to him; he frets and fumes; you shall hear him sooner curse God, than charge himself; but the sincere soul nourisheth most sweet and amiable apprehensions of God, which bind him to the peace, that he dare not think or speak unbeseeming the glory or goodness of God, as we see in David, Psalm xxxix. 9. *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, because thou, Lord, didst it.* This holy man had a breach made both in his body and spirit at this time; he was sick and sad, yet he remembers from whose hand the blow came: *Thou, Lord, didst it:* Thou, whom I love dearly, and so can take it kindly: thou, whom I have offended, and so take it patiently: yea, thou, who mightest have cast me into a bed of flames, instead of my bed of sickness, and therefore I accept thy correction thankfully. Thus he catches at the blow, without retorting it back upon God, by any quarrelling discontented language.

Secondly, Sincerity enables the soul to expect good from God, when his hand presseth hardest on body or soul, Psalm xxxviii. Never was David in a worse case for body and soul; it would break a flinty heart to read the sad moans that his throbbing soul makes, in the anguish of his flesh, and bitter agony of his spirit; one would have thought they had been the pangs of a soul going away in despair; yet even in this great storm, we find him casting out his sheet-anchor of hope, and that takes sure hold of God for his mercy, ver. 15. *In thee, O Lord, do I hope, thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.* This expectation of good from God,

God, corrects and qualifies the bitterness that is upon his palate, from his present sorrow; so Psalm xl. 17. *I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me.* My state at present is sad enough, but my comfort is, I am not cast out of his mind; I know his thoughts are at work to do me good. Holy Job proves that he is not an hypocrite, as his friends uncharitably charged him, by this confidence he had on God in the depth of all his afflictions, Job xiii. 15, 16. *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him. I will maintain my ways before him, he also shall be my salvation, for an hypocrite shall not come before him.* As if he had said, if I were not sincere, I durst not appeal thus to God, and comfortably believe, while God is killing of me, that he would yet save me; *for an hypocrite shall not come before him;* that is, he dare not thus trust himself in God's hands, and acquiesce in his promise when his neck is on the block, and God's knife at his throat; no, if he could, he would never come in his sight; his conscience tells him, God knows him too well, to intend him any good; and therefore, when God begins to lay his hand on him, (except his conscience be dedolent and seared, which is the curse that God now and then brands the gross hypocrite with) he presently hath the scent of hell-fire in his soul, in a fearful expectation thereof; and looks on these present afflictions, though but a cloud of a hand-breadth, as those which will spread further and further, till the shades of that everlasting night overtake, and encompass him in hell's utter darkness.

SECT. III.—Thirdly, Sincerity comforts the Christian, when he wants success visibly to crown his endeavours in his place and calling. A great affliction, no doubt, to a gracious soul; as when a minister of the gospel spends his strength, and swailes out his life to a gain-saying people, that sit like stocks and stones under his ministry, no more moved than the seats they sit on, and the pillars they lean to; ignorant and prophane he found them, and such he sees he is like to leave them, after twenty years, may be almost twice told, spent among them. This must needs be a heart-aching trial to one, that God hath given a compassionate heart to souls. It costs the mother no small pains to bring forth a living child, but what are the bitter throws of one that travails with a dead child? Such is the travail of a poor minister with a dead-hearted people, yet the portion of none of the meanest of God's messengers; indeed God sets his most eminent servants about the hardest work.

Now sincerity lightens this affliction, and sends in that which may cheer the soul under it. Paul saw he should not carry all to heaven with him he preached unto; to many the gospel was *a savour of death unto death.* The sweet perfume of the gospel proved a deadly scent to hasten and heighten their damnation; this

this could not be but sad to so tender a physician, to see his patients die under his hands; *Yet he thanks God, that makes him triumph in Christ*, 2 Cor. ii. 14. But how can he do this? Poor souls drop to hell from under his pulpit, hearing him, and he triumph? This is as strange as to see the father follow his child's mournful hearse, not weeping, but singing and dancing. Mark, and the wonder will cease; he doth not triumph that they perish, but that he is not guilty of their blood; not that they are damned, but that he sincerely endeavoured their salvation, ver. 17. *For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God, but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.* Had Paul dropped some wild gourd of error into his doctrine, or mingled some ingredient of his own, with what Christ, the great physician, had ordered, he would have had little list to triumph; but preaching pure gospel, and that purely, with a sincere heart, he might triumph in Christ, that made him faithful, and shall triumph over them, when he meets them again at the great day at the bar of Christ, where to their face he shall witness against them, and vote with Christ for their eternal destruction. Methinks I hear all the faithful ministers of Christ giving an account to him, on whose errand they were sent, in the language of Jeremiah's prayer, Jer. xvii. 16. *Lord, we have not desired this woeful day, thou knowest,* which now hath taken hold of these wretched souls, and which we warned them of; that which came out of our lips, in our preaching to them, was right before thee; the life of their souls was dear and precious to us; we could have sacrificed our temporal lives to save the eternal life of their souls; but nothing we could say or do would stay them; to hell they would go, over all the prayers, tears, and intreaties, out of thy word, which stood in their way. This will make the sincere ministers of Christ lift up their heads with joy, and such forlorn wretches hang down their heads with shame to look Christ or them in the face, though now they can brazen it out with an impudent forehead. So for parents and masters; sincerity in your relations will comfort you, though you see not your seed come up, which you have sown upon them in your godly examples, holy instructions, and seasonable corrections. David was one that *walked in his house with a perfect heart*, Psalm ci. 2. careful in the nurture of his children, as appears in his pious counsel to Solomon, 2 Chron. xxviii. 9. (though not without failings). But many of his children were none of the best; one incestuous, another imbruing his hands in his brother's blood, a third catching at his crown traitorously while his father was alive, which made this holy man sadly foresee how the squares would go when he was dead and gone; yet, in this great disorder of his family, how comfortable do we find him on his dying bed? *Though my house*

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be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. Surely he had done his duty sincerely, this was his evidence for his interest in the covenant, and the covenant was all his desire and salvation.

In a word, in times of public calamity, when the flood of God's wrath comes rolling in upon a nation, like waves, irresistibly, at the wide breach which the high crying sins of the times make, and the few righteous that are found upon the place, labour to stand in the gap, by their prayers begging the life of the nation; but God will not hear, (for so it sometimes falls out, though they were like Noah, Job, and Daniel, *greatly beloved* of God, that no bail will be taken for a nation under arrest of God's judgments); even then sincerity will be a sweet support, while we share with others in the common calamity. Jeremiah, he bestirred him zealously for God, in testifying against the sins of the times, and for the people faithfully and earnestly with God by prayer; but he could neither convert them by his preaching, nor divert the wrath of God by his praying. The Jews bid him hold his peace, and prophesy no more against them: God stops his mouth also, and bids him pray no more for them. Now in this dismal state of things, what easeth his sorrowful heart, swoln with grief for their sins, and judgments hastening upon them, like an eagle to her prey? Truly nothing can, but the remembrance of his sincerity to God and man in those debauched times, Jer. xviii. 20. *Remember that I stood up before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them.* As if he had said, O Lord, though I cannot prevail with this rebellious generation to repent of their sins, or with thy Majesty, to repent of thy wrath gone out by an irreversible decree against them; yet, remember that I have been faithful in my place both to thee and them; whereas on the contrary, horror and amazement of spirit is the portion, in such times of public calamity, of hypocrites, as we see in Pashur, Jer. xx. who was a man that bare great sway at court in Jeremiah's time, a bitter enemy to him, and the message he brought from God to the Jews, labouring to sooth up the king and princes with vain hopes of golden days coming (point-blank against the word of the Lord, in the mouth of Jeremiah): and what becomes of him when the storm falls on that unhappy people? Jeremiah tells him his doom, ver. 4. that God will make him a Magor Massibib, a terror to himself; he should not only share in the common calamity, but have a brand of God's especial wrath set upon him above others.

SECT. IV.—Fourthly, Sincerity girds the Christian with strength of comfort, when deprived of those opportunities which sometimes God had intrusted him with for serving of him. An

affliction (considered in itself) so grievous to a gracious soul, that he knows none he fears more; he could choose any, might he be his own carver, before it: to be poor, disgraced, persecuted, any thing, rather than be laid aside as a broken instrument, unserviceable to his God. Indeed he values his life, and all the comforts of it, by the opportunities they afford for the glorifying God. David stops the mouth of his soul, which began to whisper some discontented language, with this, that *he should yet praise God*, Psal. xlii. *Why art thou disquieted, O my soul? I shall yet praise him.* All is well with David, and no cause of disquiet in his soul, whatever besides goes cross to him, may he but praise God, and have opportunity of glorifying him. Joseph, when God had so strangely raised him pinnacle-high, as I may say, to honour in a strange land, he doth not bless himself in his preferment, carnally to think how great a man he is, but interprets the whole *series* of providence, bringing him at last to that place, wherein he stood compeer to a mighty king, to be no other than giving him an opportunity of being eminently serviceable to God in the preservation of his church, which was at that time contained in his father's family. *God hath sent me hither* (saith he) *before you, to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance,* Gen. xlv. 7. This holy man made his place give place to the work he was called to do in it for God, counting the honour of his honour to lie in the opportunity he had by it, of serving God and his church. It must therefore needs be a sad affliction to a saint, when such opportunities are taken from him, that at any time he hath enjoyed. But sincerity can make good work of this also, if God will have it so. 'Tis sad to the Christian to be laid aside, but it is comfortable to him to remember, that when he was not, he did not melt his talents away in sloth, or waste them away in riot, but was faithful in improving them for God; he counts it his affliction that God employs him not as he hath done; but he is not sorry that God can do his work without him; yea, it is a sweet comfort to him as he lives at the grave's mouth, to think that the glory of God shall not go down to the grave with him; though he dies, yet God lives, to take care of his own work; and it is not the cracking of one string, or all, that can mar the music of God's providence, who can perform his pleasure without using any creature for his instrument. In a word, 'tis sad to him to be taken from any work, wherein he might more eminently glorify God; yet this again comforts him, that God counts that done, which the Christian sincerely desires to do. David's good will in desiring to build the temple, was as much in God's account, as if he had done it; many shall be at the last day rewarded by Christ, for cloathing and feeding the poor, who, when on earth, had neither

cloath

cloaths nor bread to give, yet having had a heart to give, shall be reckoned amongst the greatest benefactors to the poor. This appears from Matt. xxv. 34. where Christ is represented, speaking not to some few saints that had great estates to bestow on charitable uses, but to all his saints, poor as well as rich: *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, &c. For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat, &c.* Mark, not ye that were rich, but *ye*, that is, all such as had bread, you gave that out; you that had not bread or money to give, (when you could not draw out your purse, you) yet drew out your souls to the hungry; hear this, O ye precious souls, that God hath made sincere, and take comfort; may be you stand low in the world, your calling is mean, your estate next to nothing, which makes you little regarded by your neighbours that overtop you. Canst thou say, though thou beest but a servant to some poor cobler, that thou desirest to walk in the truth of thy heart, approving thyself to God in thy whole course? This bird will sing as sweet a note in thy breast, as if thou wert the greatest monarch in the world. That which brings comfort to the greatest saint in a time of distress, is the same which comforts the meanest in the family, and that is the love and favour of God, interest in Christ, and the precious promises, which *in him are Yea and Amen*. Now sincerity is the best evidence for our title to those. It will not be much insisted on, whether much or little hath been done by us, as whether that much or little were in sincerity. *Well done, good and faithful servant*; not well done, thou hast done great things, ruled states and kingdoms, been a famous preacher in thy time, &c. but thou hast been faithful; and that thou mayest be, that standest in the obscurest corner of the world. Good *Hezekiah* knew this, and therefore on his sick bed he doth not tell God of his great services he had done, though none had done more, but only desires God to take notice of the truth and sincerity of his heart, *Remember that I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight*, Isaiah xxxviii. 3.

CHAP. XIX.

A Brief Applicatory Improvement of the Point, both in General and Particular Branches also.

IT remains that the point be applied in its several branches, which were three; sincerity hath a preserving strength, a re-

storing strength, and a comforting strength. But for a quick dispatch, we shall do it under two heads, clapping the two former into one.

Use 1. First, therefore, hath sincerity a strengthening virtue, whereby it either preserves the soul from falling into sin, or helps the Christian, fallen, up again.

First, This affords thee, Christian, a further discovery of thy heart, whether sincere or not; put it here upon the trial. Dost thou find a power imparted to thee, whereby thou art enabled to repel a temptation to sin, when thou hast no weapon left thee to defend thee against it, but the command forbidding it, or some arrow taken out of the quiver of the gospel, such as the love of Christ to thee, thy love to him, and the like? May be the temptation is laid so cunningly, that thou mayest sin, and save thy credit too, having a back-door opened to let thee into it secretly.—Thou shalt hazard nothing apparently of thy temporal concernment; yea, rather greatly advantage it, if thou wilt hearken to the motion: Only God stands up to oppose it, his spirit tells, it is against his glory, inconsistent with the duty thou owest, and love thou professest to him. Now, speak what thou thinkest of sinning, the case is thus stated; canst thou yet stand it out valiantly, and tell satan, sin is no match for thee, till thou canst have God's consent, and reconcile sinning against him, and loving of him together? If so, bless God that hath given thee a sincere heart, and also for opening such a window as this in thy soul, through which thou mayest see that grace to be there, which seen, is the best evidence that God can give thee for thy interest in him, and life everlasting with him. Wert thou an hypocrite, thou couldst no more resist a sin so offered, than powder fire, or chaff the wind.

Again, When thou art run down by the violence of temptation, what is the behaviour of thy soul in this case? Dost thou rally thy routed forces, and again make head against thy enemy, so much the more eagerly, because foiled so shamefully? Or art thou content to sit down quietly by the loss, and choose rather to be a tame slave to thy lust, than to be at any further trouble to continue the war? The false heart indeed is soon cowed, and quickly yields subjection to the conqueror; but the sincere Christian gets heart, even when he loseth ground; uprightness makes the soul rebound higher in holy purposes against sin, by its very falls into sin. Job xl. 5. *Once have I spoken* (he means foolishly, sinfully), *but I will not answer; yea, twice, but I will proceed no further.* This made holy David beg of God to be *spared a little, that he might* have time to *recover his strength before he went hence;* loth he was to go beaten out of the field, might he but live to recover his losses, by repentance of, and some victory

victory over, those sins that had weakened and worsted him, then death should be welcome; like that brave captain, *who, wounded in fight, desired some to hold him up, that he might but see the enemy run before he died, and he should close his eyes in peace.* Deal therefore impartially with thy own soul, which way do thy falls and failings work? If they wear off the edge from thy conscience, that it is not soon keen and sharp in its reproofs for sin; if they bribe thy affections, that thou beginnest to comply with those sins with which formerly thy contest was, and likest pretty well their acquaintance, thy heart is not right; but if still thy heart meditates a revenge on thy sin that hath overpowered thee, and it lies on thy spirit (like undigested meat on a sick stomach), thou canst have no ease and content to thy troubled soul, till thou hast cleared thyself of it, as to the reigning power of it; truly then thou discoverest a sincere heart.

Use 2. Secondly, This shews of what importance it is to labour for sincerity; without it we can neither stand against, nor rise when we fall into temptation; whatever thou beggest of God, forget not a sincere heart. David saw need of more of this grace than he had, Psalm li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew in me a right spirit:* and happy was it for him that he had so much, as to make him desire more of it: What folly is it to build a house with beams on fire? The hypocrite's building must needs come to nought, there is a fire unquenched, the power of hypocrisy unmortified, that it will consume all his goodly profession; he carries into the field a heart that will deliver him up into his enemies' hands. And he is sure to be overcome, to whom his own side is not true.

Use 3. Thirdly, Bless God, O sincere Christian, for this grace; it is a blessing invaluable, crowns and diadems are not to be compared with it. In this thou hast *a heart after God's own heart;* a heart to his liking, yea, a heart to his own likeness. Nothing makes thee liker God, in the simplicity and purity of his nature, than sincerity. Truth is that God glories in; he is a God of truth. When *Haman* was bid to say what should be done to the man that the king delighted to honour, he, thinking that the king meant no other than himself, would fly as high as his ambition could carry him, and what doth he choose, but to be cloathed with the king's own apparel royal? When God gives thee sincerity, he cloaths thy soul with that which he wears himself, *who cloaths himself with truth and righteousness, as a garment.* By this, thou art made a conqueror, greater than ever Alexander was; he overcame a world of men, but thou a world of lusts and devils. Did one bless God at the sight of a toad, that God made him a man, and not a toad? how much more thankful oughtest thou to be to God, who hath made thee, that wert a hypocrite by nature,

nature, which is far worse, an upright Christian? It is a notable saying of Lactantius, *If a man would choose death, rather than to have the face and shape of a beast, though he might withal keep the soul of a man, how much more miserable is it, under the shape of a man to carry the heart of a beast?* yet such a one is the hypocrite, yea, worse; he not only under the shape of a man, but in the disguise of a saint, carries a beastly filthy heart within him.

Use 4. Fourthly, Let this encourage thee who art sincere against the fears of final apostacy. Though sincerity doth not privilege thee from falling, yet thy covenant state which thou art in (if sincere) secures thee from final apostacy. Because thy stock of grace in hand is small, thou questionest thy persevering; can these weak legs, thinkest thou, bring me to my journey's end; the few pence in my purse, little grace in my heart, bear my charges all the way to heaven, through so many expences of trials and temptations? Truly no, if thou wert to receive no more than thou hast at present; the bread thou hast in the cupboard will not maintain thee all thy life; but, soul, thou hast a covenant will help thee to more when that grows low; hath not God taught thee to pray for *thy daily bread*, and dost thou not find that the blessing of God in, thy calling diligently followed, supplies thee from day to day? And hast thou not the same bond to sue for thy spiritual eternal bread? hast thou not a Father in heaven, that knows what thou needest for thy soul, as well as body? hast thou not a dear brother, yea, husband, that is gone to heaven, where plenty of all grace is to be had, and that on purpose on his children's errand, that he might keep their souls graces and comforts alive in this necessitous world? All power is in his hands, he may go to the heap, and send what he please for your succour, and can you starve while he hath fulness of grace by him that hath undertaken to provide for you, Luke x. 35. The two pence which the Samaritan left were not enough to pay for cure and board of the wounded man; therefore he passed his word *for all that he should need besides;* Christ doth not only give a little grace in hand, but his bond for more, to the sincere soul, even as much as will bring them to heaven, Psalm lxxxiv. 11. *Grace and glory he will give, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

Use 5. Fifthly, Take heed of resting on, or glorying in, thy sincerity. 'Tis true, it will enable thee to resist temptations, and recover out, when in temptation; but who enables that? where grows the root that feeds thy grace? not in thy own ground, but in heaven; it is God alone that holds thee and it in life; he that gave it, is at cost to keep it. *The Lord is thy strength, let him be thy song;* what can the axe, though sharp,

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do without the workman? Shall the axe say, I have cut down, or the chizel, I have carved? is it not the skill and art of the workman rather? when able to resist temptation, say, *The Lord was on my side, or else I had fallen:* set up an Ebenezer, and write on it, *Hitherto the Lord hath helped me.*

Though God promiseth, in the Psalm even now cited, to give grace and glory to the upright; yet he will not give the glory of his grace to uprightness, 2 Sam. xxii. 24. we have David asserting his uprightness, and how he was preserved by it, *I was also upright before him, and have kept me from mine iniquity*, ver. 25. he declares the fruit of his uprightness, how God bare testimony to it by rewarding him for it, in vindicating him before, and giving him victory over his enemies. *Therefore the Lord hath recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his eye-sight.* Now lest he should set up himself, or applaud his own uprightness, to the prejudice of God's grace, he sweetly corrects and bounds these passages, ver. 33. *God is my strength and power, and he maketh my way perfect.* As if the holy man had said, I pray mistake me not, I do not ascribe the victory over my enemies within me or without, to myself and my uprightness; no, God did all, he is my strength and power, yea, it is he that makes my way perfect; if I be sincere more than others in my way, I must thank him for it, for he makes my way perfect. He found me at first as crooked a piece, and walking in as crooked ways, as any other, but he made me and my way perfect and strait. Had God pleased, he could have made Saul as perfect as David; had God left David, he would have been as crooked and false-hearted as Saul.

The last branch of the point was, sincerity hath a comforting strength in all sorts of affliction. The applicatory improvement of which shall be only this,

Use. Let it teach us not to fear *affliction* but *hypocrisy.* Believe it, friends, affliction is a harmless thing to a sincere soul; it cannot be so great as to make it inconsistent with his joy and comfort; a gracious soul, in the most sharp affliction, can spare his tears and pity to bestow them on the hypocrite, when in all his pomp and glory; he hath that in his bosom that gives him more comfortable apprehensions of his own affliction than standers-by have, or can have of them; which made once a holy man, when the pangs of death were on him, to ask a servant of his, weeping by his bed-side for him, *What she meant by her fears*, saying, *Never fear that my heavenly Father will do me any hurt.* Indeed affliction is not joyous to the flesh, which hath made some of God's dear children a while to shrink, but after they have been acquainted with the work, and the comforts which God bestows on his poor prisoners through the grate, they have learned another tune;

tune; like the bird that at first putting into the cage flutters, and shews her dislike of her restraint, but afterwards comes to sing more sweetly, than when at liberty to fly where she pleased.—Be not therefore so thoughtful about affliction, but careful against hypocrisy; if the bed of affliction proves hard and uneasy to thee, it is thyself that brings with thee what makes it so. Approve thyself to God, and trust him who hath promised to be his saints' bed-maker in affliction, to make it soft and easy for thee. O what a cutting word will it be in a dying hour, when thou art crying, Lord, Lord, have mercy on a poor creature, to hear the Lord say, I know thee not; 'tis not the voice of a sincere soul, but an hypocrite that howls on his bed of sorrow? What, then, wilt thou do, when fallen into the hands of God, with whom thou hast juggled in thy profession, and never sincerely didst love? If that speech was so confounding to the Patriarchs, *I am Joseph whom you sold*, that they could not endure his presence, knowing their own guilt; how intolerable will it be to hear from God's own mouth such language in a time of distress; I am God whom you have mocked, abused, and sold away for the enjoyment of your lusts, and do you now come to me? Have I any thing for you, but a hell to torment you in, to all eternity?

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